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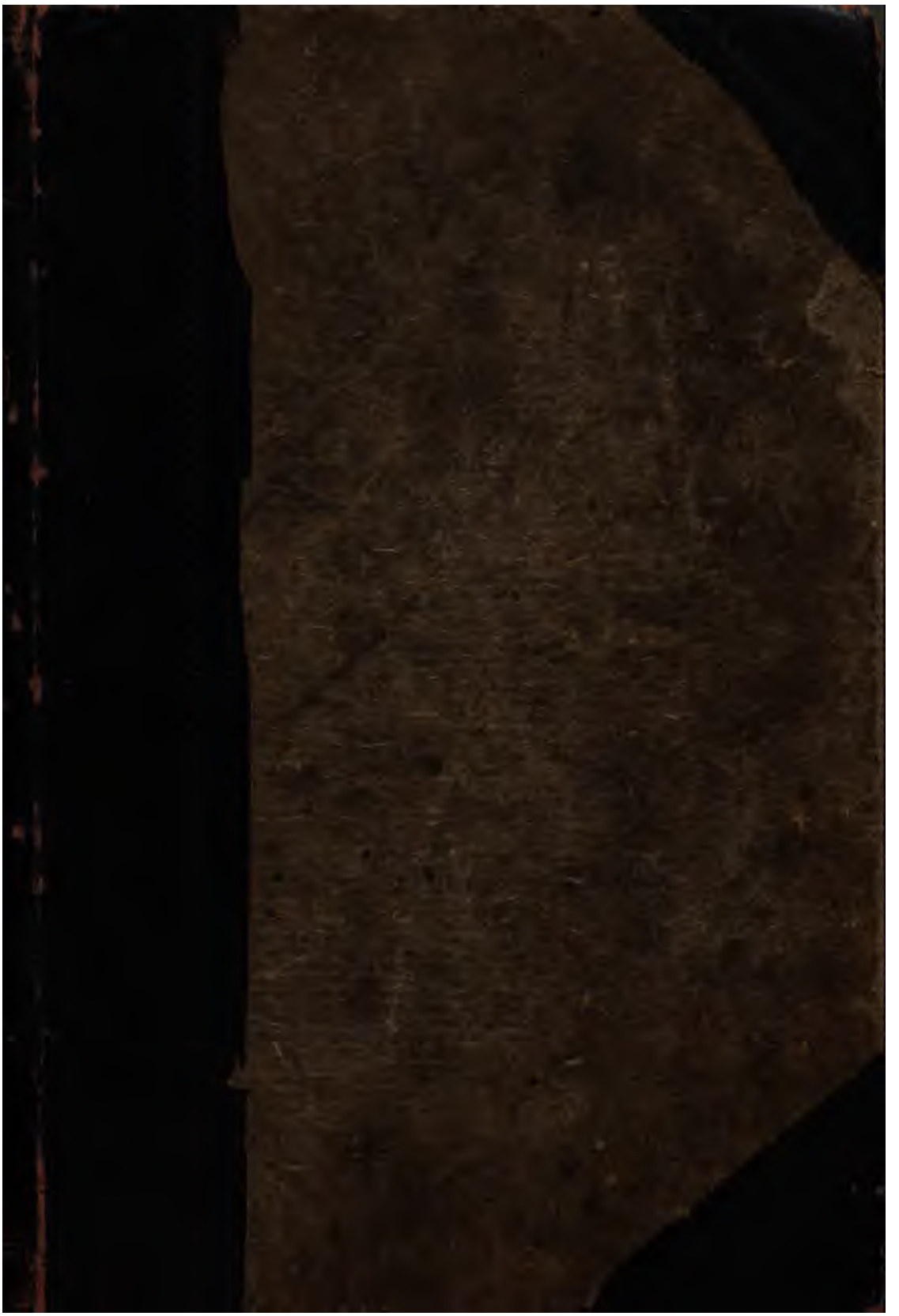

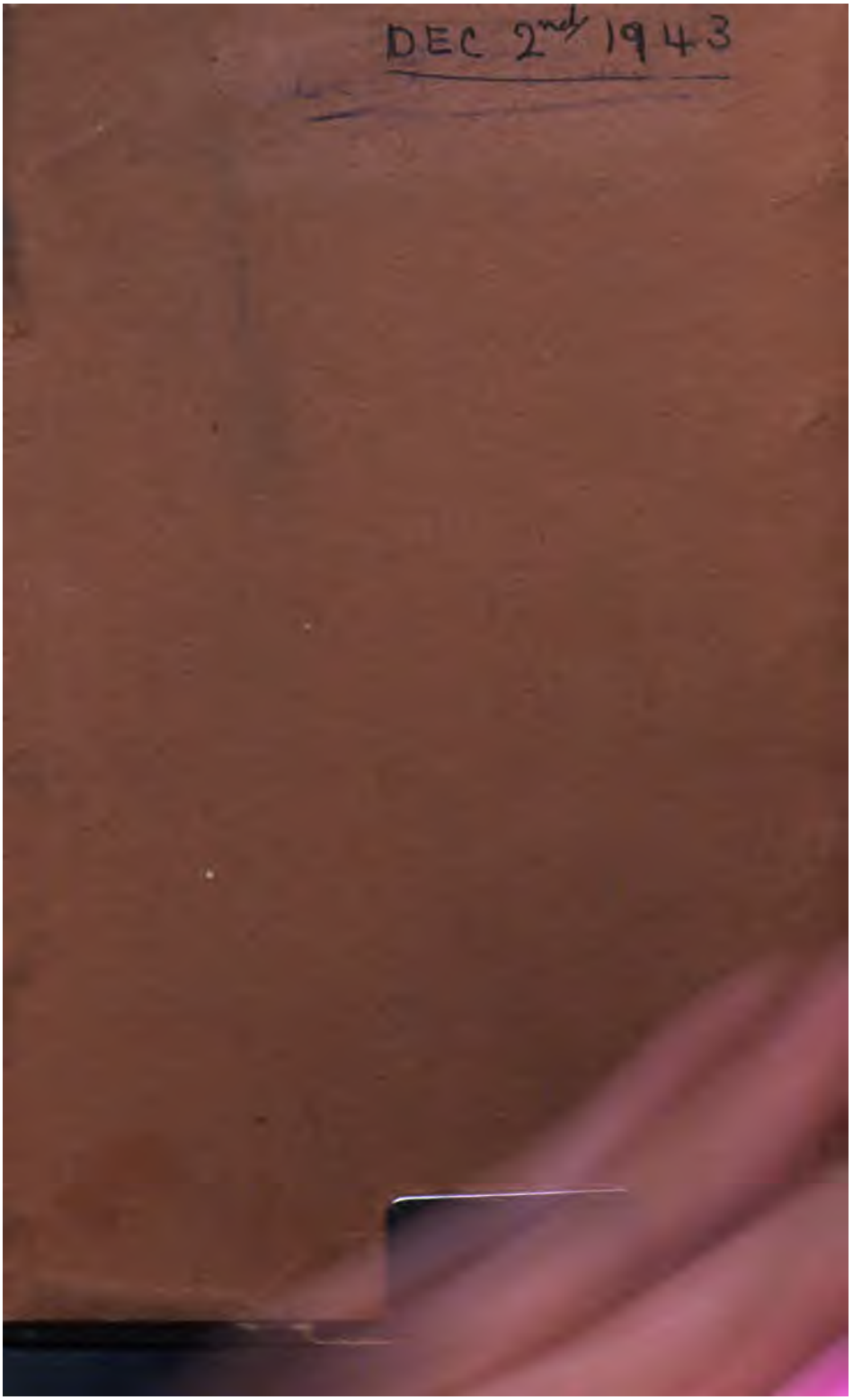
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CONTAINING

SERMONS

PREACHED AND REVISED BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

DURING THE YEAR 1862.

VOL. VIII.

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ALABASTER AND PASSMORE,
PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS, WILSON STREET, FINSBURY,
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TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE

FREE GRACE OF GOD,

HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

PREFACE.

IT is laid upon my heart in this Preface to the Eighth volume of my Sermons, to commune a little with the great host of readers who continually peruse these discourses. Unknown by face to most of you, my soul feels the bonds of brotherhood, and is filled with an earnest yearning for your welfare. Grace and peace be with you all. Amen.

Sick saints, what a delight I feel in ministering to you! Shut out from the sanctuary and the sound of the Word, you find a solace in reading what others have crowded to hear. Accept my tenderest sympathy in your affliction, while I breathe the prayer that He who suffers *in* you, may abide *with* you. The Great Captain of the host has called you to glorify Him on your beds; it may be you could never have done this in active service; what a mercy is it that a sick chamber affords you opportunities to honour Him. Your patience, holy resignation and joyous faith, make you invaluable teachers to those believers who visit you, and even your ungodly friends may be greatly blessed by your means. Little do you dream how well your words are remembered, and how powerful they will be even when you have fallen asleep in Jesus. From the green mound in the cemetery your loving voice shall sound in their ears. Those very persons who now seem so indifferent, may be the first to be converted by your testimony. Speak well of your Lord; you see Him often, let His name be ever in your mouth. He makes *your* bed; let your bosom be a pillow for Him. Let your chamber be a sanctuary, your bed a pulpit, your living loving experience of divine grace the constant sermon. We cannot do without you in the Lord's battles. Your power for good is wonderful; forget not your advantageous position, but lift up the banner of your Lord on high. Let no persons retire from your bedside without being enriched by some affectionate admonition. In the night-watches, when your eyes are held waking so that you cannot sleep, plead for the Church, the world, your minister, your friends, and do not omit the unworthy brother who now writes to you. What showers of mercies your intercessions may bring down. The golden keys of heaven are at your girdle, open the treasury and bless us all. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in you, so may your consolation also abound by Christ."

My brethren in the ministry, receive my affectionate salutations and my best thanks for your kind endeavours to promote the circulation of these sermons. I count myself thrice happy to have so many readers among the leaders of our Israel; and if, like the lad in the Evangelists, I may bring the barley loaves and small fishes, which the Master may distribute to you, that by you the thousands may be fed, we will all of us rejoice together. Brethren, I trust we long for souls, and are not to be satisfied unless we see them saved. We give out medicine daily, but this would be sorry work if we did not see men healed thereby. It is our duty to serve our Master even if no apparent success should crown our labours; but surely we are not faithful servants unless we long and pant after success. He is a brutal physician who, having administered the potion, is quite at ease whether the patient shall live or die. Let us hunger and thirst after conversions with a passionate longing which none but God himself can satisfy. Let the terrors of hell quicken our zeal to save men from them; for, alas! brethren, they are dropping into them every hour. Let the preciousness of Christ impel us to great earnestness, for who can bear that He should be despised and rejected of men? Why must this pearl be trodden under foot of swine for ever? Oh! why must the matchless beauties of Immanuel for ever be forgotten? Time and eternity both stand behind us in the pulpit and cry, "Work while it is called to-day; the night cometh, when no man can work." Let us not spare our arrows, for death is shooting his shafts abroad. If men will not escape damning, it is certain that they cannot escape dying. Up then, each one of us to our work, and let nothing but the winning of souls content us. Forgive me if I use the language of Baxter on my own account, for when I see so many *comfortable* preachers, at ease in Zion, I marvel the stones do not cry out against them. "I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient reverend men, that have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years with an unprofitable people, among whom they have scarcely been able to discern any fruits of their labours, how they can, with so much patience, continue among them. Were it my case, though I durst not leave the vineyard, nor quit my calling, yet I should suspect that it was God's will I should go somewhere else, and another come in my place, that might be fitter for them; and I should not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner."

This year has brought in its seals to the Ministry at the Tabernacle in undiminished numbers; but, alas, how many are unconverted still. O for a harvest, a joyful harvest of souls!

To those brethren who publicly read these sermons in cottages and village preaching-rooms, a word of hopeful encouragement. Several cases of conviction and comfort have come under my notice this year

through your good work in publicly reading my discourses. I pray you, persevere. No man need despair of winning souls. In these days the lack of talent is no bar to usefulness. If we cannot preach the sermon ourselves, if reading it to a few cottagers may be blessed by God the Holy Spirit, who would refuse to do it? Go on, dear friends, and may the Lord continue to bless us in publishing the glad tidings of His grace. We serve a generous Master who thinks much of our littles. O that we thought more of Him.

To all my brethren, thanks and Christian love. Thanks for your assistance in spreading my "words for Jesus;" and love, because we are one in Him. Let me entreat you to wrestle together with me in your prayers that the good news may be received by many prepared hearts. If all my readers would pray for the preacher and for a blessing upon the sermons, as they travel throughout all lands, what a great result would follow. The Holy Spirit is able to make the Word as successful now as in the days of the Apostles. He can bring in by hundreds and thousands, as easily as by ones and twos. If we have the Spirit sealing our ministry with power, it will signify very little about our talent. Men may be poor and uneducated; their words may be broken and ungrammatical; there may be none of the polished periods of Hall or the glorious thunders of Chalmers; but if the might of the Spirit attend them, the humblest evangelists will be more successful than the most learned of divines or the most eloquent of preachers. It is extraordinary grace, not talent, that wins the day. It is extraordinary spiritual power, not extraordinary mental power, that we need. Mental power may fill a chapel; but spiritual power fills the Church. Mental power may gather a congregation; spiritual power will save souls. We want spiritual power. Oh! we know some before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual power; and when they speak, they have not the Holy Spirit with them; but we know others —simple-hearted, worthy men, who speak their country dialect, and who stand up to preach, and whether it be in a barn, or the village green, the Spirit of God clothes every word with power. Hearts are broken, souls are saved, and sinners are born again. O Spirit of the the living God! we want *Thee*. Thou art the life, the soul, the source of Thy people's success. Without Thee they can do nothing; with Thee they can do everything. Dear readers, we want above all things, the "power from on high."

During the past year, partly in consequence of better type, our circulation has largely increased. But why should it not at once be multiplied at least four times. Will each reader assist us? Have you not three friends who might be induced to take the sermons weekly or monthly? If they have been useful to you, make it your business to introduce

them to others. Get three friends to become subscribers, and our desire is fulfilled. When Popery perverts its thousands; when Atheism climbs into high places; when Scepticism wears a mitre; when heresy fills the tutor's chair; when lax theology is becoming the rule and sound divinity the exception, it is time that all lovers of true doctrine should spread it with greater vigour.

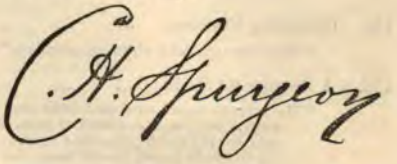
A friend has scattered a large number of sermons in the colleges and towns of Ireland. Working with great discretion, he sowed the seed so rapidly in each place, that before the foul bird, the Popish priest, could hasten to stop him, the work was done. Our friend's adventures in some of the Irish towns prove that religious liberty is a thing yet to be understood by that priest-ridden people. We shall, we are sure, hear of this sowing in years to come.

An Italian translation of the sermons is now under serious contemplation, and will probably be produced during the ensuing year. Everywhere—from China and Hindostan, Australia and Africa, the States and the Brazils, Germany and France, Florence and Rome, we have heard of good from the sermons. From ships of war, foreign military stations, mission establishments, and exploring parties, we have had words of gratitude and friendship. Therefore do we thank God, and take courage. Unto the Lord our God be honour and praise for another year's support. In His name we set up our banner and advance with confidence.

Apologies are again offered for all grammatical and typographical errors, the necessary result of hasty revision and printing; these are, however, much fewer and far less serious than in former years.

And now, brethren, farewell. Cease not to pray for,

Yours ever truly,



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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A PSALM FOR THE NEW YEAR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 5TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."—2 Peter iii. 18.

BEHOLD, beloved, our perpetual dangers. Whither can we go to escape from peril? Where shall we fly to avoid temptation? If we venture into business, worldliness is there. If we retire to our homes, trials are there. One would have imagined that in the green pastures of the Word of God there would have been perfect security for God's sheep. Surely no lion shall be there, and no ravenous beast shall go up thereon! Alas! it is not so. For even while we are reading the Bible we are still exposed to peril. Not that the truth is dangerous, but that our corrupt hearts can find poison in the very flowers of Paradise. Mark what our apostle saith of the writings of St. Paul, "Wherein are some things which are hard to be understood." And mark the danger to which we are exposed, lest we, being unlearned and unstable, should wrest even the Word of God itself to our own destruction. With the Bible before our eyes, we may still commit sin; and pondering over the hallowed words of inspiration, we may receive a deadly wound from "the error of the wicked." Even at the horns of the altar we need that God should still cover us with the shadow of his wings. It is a very pleasing reflection that our gracious Father has provided a shield by which we may be sheltered from every ill, and in our text the evil of heterodoxy finds a suitable preventative. We are in danger, lest misinterpreting Scripture we should make God to say what he does not; and lest by departing from the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we should wrest the letter of the Word and lose its spirit, and from the letter draw a meaning which may be for our soul's ruin. How shall we escape this? Peter, speaking by the Holy Ghost, has in the words before us, pointed out our safeguard. While ye search the Scriptures and grow in acquaintance with them, see to it that ye grow in grace; and while ye desire to know the doctrine, long above all to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and let your study of Scripture, and your growth in grace and in the knowledge

of Christ, still be subservient to that higher object, that you may live to bring glory both now and for ever to Him who hath loved you and bought you with his blood. Let your hearts say evermore, "Amen" to the doxology of praise, so shall ye be kept from all pestilent errors, and ye shall not "fall from your own stedfastness." It appears, then, that our text is adapted to be a heavenly remedy for certain diseases to which even students of Scripture are exposed; and I am persuaded it may serve also as a most blessed directory to us through the whole of the coming year.

I might divide my text, this morning, as good old Adams does. He says there are here two trumpets. One is blown from heaven to earth—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" the other sounds from earth to heaven—"To him be glory both now and for ever." Or I might quote him again. He says, here is first a point of *theology*, "Grow in grace;" secondly, a point of *doxology*, "To him be glory both now and for ever." We will take the text in the same natural divisions with other headings, and just notice, first, that we have here *a divine injunction, with a special direction;* and secondly, *a grateful doxology, with a suggestive conclusion.*

I. To begin, then, at the beginning, we have here first of all, A DIVINE INJUNCTION WITH A SPECIAL DIRECTION: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"*Grow in grace.*" *What* is this? It must be in the outset implied that we have been quickened by grace, otherwise this text cannot apply to us at all. Dead things cannot grow. Only those who are alive unto God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, have in them any power or capability of growth. The great Quickener must first implant the seeds of life, then afterwards those seeds can germinate and grow. To you, therefore, who are dead in trespasses and sins, this text has no application. You cannot grow in grace, because as yet you are under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God abideth on you. Tremble, repent, believe, and may God have mercy on you. But being alive from the dead, and quickened by the Spirit of God which is in you, beloved brethren, *you* who are born again are bidden to grow, for growth shall prove your life. A post planted in the earth grows not; but a tree rooted there, increases from a sapling to a forest king. Drop a pebble into the richest soil, and it will be a pebble still of the same size; put in there the grain or the pulse, and it will spring up and produce its stalk and its flower. Ye who are alive unto God, see to it that ye grow in all the graces. Grow in that root-grace, *faith*. Seek to believe the promises better than ye have done. Go from that trembling faith which says, "Lord, I believe: help thou my unbelief," upward to that which staggers not at the promise, but which, like Abraham, believes that he who has promised is able also to perform. Let your faith increase in extent, believing more truth; let it increase in firmness, getting a tighter grip of every truth; let it increase in constancy, not being feeble or wavering, nor always tossed about with every wind; let your faith daily increase in simplicity, resting more fully, and more entirely, and more completely upon the finished work of your Lord Jesus Christ. See to it that your *love* also grows. If ye have loved with a spark, pray that the spark may

become an all-consuming flame. If ye have brought to Christ some little, pray that ye may bring your all; and may offer that all in such a fashion, that like Mary's broken alabaster box, the king himself may be satisfied with the perfume. Ask that your love may become more extended—that ye may have love unto all the saints; more practical, that it may move your every thought, your every word and deed; more intense, that ye may become as burning and shining lights whose flame is love to God and man. Pray that ye may grow in *hope*, that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints: that ye may be looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that the hope not seen as yet may enable you with patience to wait for it; that ye may by hope enter into the joys of heaven while ye are on earth; that hope may give you immortality while you are yet mortal—may give you resurrection before you die—may give you to see God, while as yet the glass darkly parts you from him. Ask that you may grow in *humility*, till you can say, "I am less than the least of all the saints;" that ye may grow in *consecration* till ye can cry, "For me to live is Christ: to die is gain;" that ye may grow in *contentment* till ye can feel, "In whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content." Advance in likeness to the Lord Jesus, that your very enemies may take knowledge of you that ye have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. In fine, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be anything that is lovely and of good repute, if there be anything that can increase your usefulness, that can add to your happiness, that can make you more serviceable to man and more glorious towards God, grow in it, for ye have not yet attained, neither are ye yet already perfect.

Following up an illustration furnished by the holy Scriptures, let me remind you all, ye faithful believers in Christ, that ye are compared to *trees*—trees of the Lord's right hand planting. Seek to grow as the tree grows. Pray that this year ye may grow *downward;* that ye may know more of your own vileness, more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted in humility. Pray that your roots may penetrate below the mere topsoil of truth, into the great rocks which underlie the uppermost stratum; that ye may get a good hold of the doctrines of eternal love, of immutable faithfulness, of complete satisfaction, of union to Christ, of the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. These deep things of God will yield a rich and abundant sap, and your roots shall drink from the hidden fountains of "the depth which lieth under." This will be a growth which will not add to your fame, which will not minister to your vanity: but it will be invaluable in the hour of storm, a growth the value of which no heart can conceive when the hurricane is tearing up the hypocrite, and hurling into the sea of destruction the "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." As ye root downward, seek to grow *upward*. Send out the topshoot of your love towards heaven. As the trees send out their spring shoot and their midsummer shoot; and as you see upon the top

of the fir that new green child of spring, the fresh shoot which lifts its hand towards the sun, so pant to have more love and greater desires after God, a nearer approach towards him in prayer, a sweeter spirit of adoption, a more intense and intimate fellowship with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. This mounting upwards will add to your beauty and to your delight. Then pray to grow *on either side*. Stretch out your branches; let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it also that ye grow in *fruitfulness*, for to increase the bough without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. Labour this year by God's grace to bring forth more fruit unto him than ye have ever done. Lord, give to this congregation more of the fruits of penitence for sin, of faith in the great sacrifice, of love to Jesus, of zeal for the conversion of souls. We would not be as the gleanings of the vintage when there is only here and there a cluster upon the uppermost bough, we would be as the valley of Eshcol, whose presses burst with new wine. This is to grow in grace: to root downward, to shoot upward, to extend your influences like far-reaching branches, and to bring forth fruit unto the Lord's glory.

But we will borrow another figure from Scripture. Brethren in Jesus Christ, we are not only compared to trees, but to *children*. Let us grow as babes do, nourished by unadulterated milk. Steadily, slowly, but surely and certainly. Little each day, but much in years. Oh that we may grow as a child does in strength, till the little tottering limbs of our faith shall be firm muscular legs with which the young man may run without weariness, and feet upon which the strong man may walk without fainting. As yet our wings are callow, and we can hardly leave the nest. Lord, bid our growth proceed till we can mount as with the wings of eagles towards thyself, surmounting clouds and storms, and dwelling in the serene presence of the Most High. Let us grow in the development of all our powers. Let us ask that we may be no more little infants of a span long, but that many cubits may be added to our stature till we ripen to perfect men in Christ Jesus. And let us specially pray that we may grow as healthy children, uniformly. Brethren, it is an ill sign if a child's head enlarges, but not the rest of his body, or if its arm or foot should be swollen to an ill proportion. Beauty consists in the proportion of every part. A vigorous judgment should not be yoked with a cold heart, nor a clear eye with a withered hand. A giant's head rides ill on a dwarf's shoulders. A virtue nourished at the expense of others is a fattened cannibal fed upon the flesh and blood of its murdered kinsmen; and it ill becomes a Christian to harbour such a monster. Let us pray that faith and love and every grace may be developed; that not one power of the man may be left unnurtured or ungrown, for only thus we can truly grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But do ye inquire *why* and wherefore we should thus grow in grace? Let us say, brethren, that if we do not advance in grace it is a sorrowful sign. It is a mark of *unhealthiness*. It is an unhealthy child that grows not, a cankered tree that sends forth no fresh shoots. More; it may be not only a sign of unhealthiness but of *deformity*. If a

man's shoulders have come to a certain breadth, and his lower limbs refuse to lift him aloft, we call him a dwarf, and we look upon him with some degree of pity. He is ill-formed. O Lord, let us grow, for we would not be abortions, we would not be deformities. We would be children like unto God our Father: we would be comely ones, every one of us like the sons of a king. Not to grow may be, moreover, the sign of *death*. It may say to us, Inasmuch as thou growest not, thou livest not; inasmuch as thou dost not increase in faith, and love, and grace; and inasmuch as thou dost not ripen towards the harvest, fear and tremble lest thou shouldst only have a name to live and be destitute of life, lest thou shouldst be the painted counterfeit; a lovely flower-picture drawn by the painter's skilful hand, but without reality, because without the life-power which should make it bud and germinate, and blossom and bring forth fruit. Advance in grace, because not to progress augurs many evils things, and may teach that worst of all things, the want of spiritual life. Grow in grace, because, beloved, to increase in grace is the only pathway to enduring nobility. Oh! would ye not wish to stand with that noble host who have served their Master well, and have entered into their eternal rest. Who among ye does not wish to have his name written with the missionaries of modern times—with Judson and with Carey, with Williams and with Moffat? Who amongst us is there who has no ambition to find his name written among those servants of God—Whitfield, Grimshaw, Newton, Romaine, Toplady and others who preached the Word with power? Are there any of us who wish to go back to the vile dust from whence we sprung, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung?" Then let us be as we are; let us cease our march. Meanness lies at your door, be stunted and be ignoble. But if we would be princes in God's Israel, if we would be mighty warriors for the cross of Christ, let us pray this prayer, "Lord, bid us grow in grace, that we may be faithful servants, and receive thy commendation at the last." But to grow is not only to be noble, it is to be happy. That man who stays growing, refuses to be blessed. With most men in business, if they do not win, they lose. With the warrior, if he gains not in the battle, his enemy is getting an advantage. That wise man who gets no wiser, grows more foolish. That Christian who does not know more of his Lord, and become more like him, knows less of his Lord and becomes less like him. Our armour if unused will tarnish, and our arms if not strengthened by effort will be weakened by indolence. Our *happiness* declines as our spirituality fades. To be happy, I say, we must go forward. Forward is the sunlight! forward is victory! forward is heaven! forward is Christ! But here, to stand still is danger; nay, it is death. O Lord, for our happiness' sake bid thou us advance, and for our usefulness' sake let us ascend. Oh! if we as a congregation and as a Church grew in grace more; if we were stronger in faith, mightier in prayer, more fervent in heart, more holy in life, who can tell how much we might effect for our age. Men who walk but lightly, leave but faint steps; but men who tread with the tramp of Roman soldiers stamp their foot-prints on the sands of time, never to be erased. So let us live, that in our day and in after days the world

may be the better, and Christ's Church the more prosperous for our having lived. For this reason, if for no other, let us grow in grace.

Oh, could I fire you with some hallowed ambition to-day I were but too happy! Could I snatch from some ancient altar a live coal such as that which fell upon the lip of Esaias, I would say unto you, Lo, this has touched your lip—go forth in the spirit and power of God, even the Most High; and live as they lived who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might serve their Master and be found in him. I point you to the spirits who have entered within the veil and who rest upon the couches of eternal glory, and I say, they won the victory by grace, and growth in grace was the means of their triumph. Emulate them; press forward as they did, and through grace you shall inherit their rest and their triumph, and sit down with them for ever.

But do ye inquire *how* ye shall grow in grace? The answer is simple. He who gave you grace must give you more of it. Where ye first received your grace there ye must receive the increase of that grace. He who made the cattle and who created man, was the same who afterwards said "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." So he that has given you grace must speak with the fiat of his omnipotence in your heart and say to that grace, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the soul till its native emptiness shall be filled, and the natural wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like a rose." But at the same time we would have you use the means; and those means are much prayer, a more diligent search of the sacred Scriptures, a more constant fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, greater activity in his cause, an earnest attendance upon the means of grace, a devout reception of all revealed truth, and so forth. If ye do these things ye shall never be stunted or dwarfed, for he that has given you life will thus enable you to fulfil the word which he spake to you by his apostle, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

I have thus explained the divine exhortation; but you perceive it contains a *special injunction*, upon which we must pause a moment. "And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

My beloved brethren in the Lord Jesus, we must see to it that we ripen in the knowledge of *Him*. Oh that this year we may know more of him in his divine nature, and in his human relationship to us; in his finished work, in his death, in his resurrection, in his present glorious intercession, and in his future royal advent. To know more of Christ in his work is, I think, a blessed means of enabling us to work more for Christ.

We must study to know more of Christ also in his character—in that divine compound of every perfection, faith, zeal, deference to his Father's will, courage, meekness and love. He was the lion of the tribe of Judah, and yet the man upon whom the dove descended in the waters of baptism. Let us thirst to know him of whom even his enemies said, "Never man spake like this man," and his unrighteous judge said, "I find no fault in him."

Above all, let us long to know Christ in his person. This year endeavour to make a better acquaintance with the crucified one. Study

his hands and his feet; abide ye hard by the cross, and let the sponge, the vinegar and the nails, be subjects of your devout attention. This year seek to penetrate into his very heart, and to search those deep far-reaching caverns of his unknown love, that love which can never find a rival, and can never know a parallel. If ye can add to this a knowledge of his sufferings, ye will do well. Oh! if ye can grow in the knowledge of fellowship—if ye shall this year drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism—if ye shall this year abide in him and he in you—blessed shall ye be. This is the only growth in grace which is true growth; and all other growth which leads us not to increase in the knowledge of Christ is but the puffing up of the flesh, and not the building up of the Spirit.

Grow in the knowledge of Christ, then. And do ye ask me *why?* Oh! if ye have ever known Him you will not ask that question. He that longs not to know more of Christ, knows nothing of him yet. He that ever sipped this wine will thirst for more, for although Christ doth satisfy, yet it is such a satisfaction, that we want to taste more, and more, and more, and more. Oh! if ye know the love of Jesus, I am sure as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so will you pant after him. If ye say ye do not desire to know him better, then I tell you ye love him not, for love always cries, "Nearer, nearer, nearer." Absence from Christ is hell; but presence with Christ is heaven; and, as we get nearer to him, our heaven becomes more heavenly, and we enjoy it more, and feel more that it is of God. Oh! may you this year come to the very well of Bethlehem, and not merely receive a vessel from it, as David did, at the risk of the lives of three mighty men; but may you come to the well and drink—drink from the well itself, from that bottomless well-spring of eternal love. Oh, this year may the secret of the Lord be with you, and may you be in the secret place of the Most High! My Master, shouldest thou permit me to ask thee one thing as a special favour, it should be this, that I may "know him and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable to his death!" Nearer to thee, blessed Lord, nearer to thee: this all our cry shall be. The Lord grant that our cry may be heard, that we may grow in the knowledge of Christ!

We wish to know Christ this year as our *Lord*—Lord of every thought and every desire, of every word and every act. And as our *Saviour* too, our Saviour from every indwelling sin, our Saviour from every evil past, from every trial to come. All hail, Jesu! we salute thee as Lord. Teach us to feel thy Kingship over us, and to feel it every hour. All hail, thou crucified One! We acknowledge thee as Saviour; help us to rejoice in thy salvation, and to feel the plenitude of that salvation in all and every part of spirit, soul, and body, being wholly saved by thee.

I have thus, men and brethren, sought to expound the point of theology; I lift up my heart in prayer for you all that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

II. In the second place, we have A GRATEFUL THANKSGIVING, WITH A MOST SUGGESTIVE TERMINATION: "To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

The apostles, we must remark, very frequently suspended their writing in order to lift up their hearts in praise. Praise is never out of season, and it is no interruption to interrupt any engagement in order to laud and magnify our God. "To him be glory." Brethren, do not let me preach now, but let me interpret your emotions. Let it be not so much my utterance, as your utterance by my lips. Let every heart joyously feel this doxology, To him, the God that made the heavens and the earth, without whom was not anything made; to him who in his infinite compassion became the surety of the covenant—to him who became a babe of a span long—to him who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—to him who on the bloody tree poured out his heart's life that he might redeem his people—to *him* who said "I thirst," and "It is finished!"—to *him* whose lifeless body slumbered in the grave—to him be glory. To him that burst the bonds of death—to him who ascended on high and led captivity captive—to him who sitteth at the right hand of the Father and who shall soon come to be our Judge—"to him be glory." Yes, to him, ye atheists, who deny him—to him, ye Socinians, who doubt his Deity—to him, ye kings, who vaunt your splendour, and will not have this man to reign over you—to him, ye people, who against him stand up, and ye rulers who against him take counsel—to him, the King whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion—to him be glory. To him be glory as the Lord: King of kings and Lords; "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And yet again Hosannah in the highest—Hallelujah! King of kings and Lord of lords. To him be glory as *Lord*. To him be glory as *Saviour*. He alone hath redeemed us unto God by his blood; he alone hath "trodden the wine-press," and "cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength." "To him be glory." Hear it ye angels: "To him be glory." Clap your wings. Cry "Hallelujah! to him be glory." Hear it ye spirits of the just made perfect; sweep the strings of your celestial harps, and say, "Hallelujah, glory to him who hath redeemed us unto God by his own blood." "*To him be glory.*" Church of God respond! Let every pious heart say "*To him be glory.*" Yes, unto him be glory, ye fiends of hell, as ye tremble at his presence, and see the key of your prison-house swinging at his girdle. Let heaven, and earth, and hell—let things that are, and were, and shall be, cry, "To him be glory."

But the apostle adds, "*now*"—"to him be glory, *now*." O brethren, postpone not the day of his triumph; put not off the hour of his coronation. *Now*, NOW.

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

Now, now; for now, to-day, he hath raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" now are our sins forgiven; now are we robed in his righteousness; now are our feet upon a rock, and our goings are established. Who is there among you that would defer the time of your

hosannahs? "To him be glory *now*." O cherubim above, "To him be glory now!" for ye "continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." Adore him yet again, for, "To him be glory now."

"*And for ever*." Never shall we cease our praise. Time! thou shalt grow old and die. Eternity! thine unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course; but for ever, for ever, for ever, "to him be glory." Is he not a "Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek?" "To him be glory." Is he not king for ever?—King of kings and Lord of lords, the everlasting Father? "To him be glory *for ever*." Never shall his praises cease. That which was bought with blood deserves to last while immortality endures. The glory of the cross must never be eclipsed; the lustre of the grave and of the resurrection must never be dimmed. Oh, my beloved brethren, my spirit begins to feel the ardour of the immortals. I would anticipate the songs of heaven. My tongue, had it but celestial liberty, would begin e'en now, to join those thrice-melodious sonnets sung by flaming tongues above. O Jesus! thou shalt be praised for ever. Long as immortal spirits live—long as the Father's throne endures—for ever, for ever, for ever, unto thee shall be glory.

But now, there is a conclusion to this of the most suggestive kind, "*Amen*." Brethren, I want to work this amen out—not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of blessed transport. Come, give me your hearts again. "To him be glory both now and for ever, *Amen*." What means this Amen? Amen has four meanings in Scripture. By the way, the Puritan's remark—it is a very remarkable thing—that under the old law, there was no amen to the blessings; the only amen was to the curses. When they pronounced the curses, "All the people said Amen." Under the law, there never was an amen to the blessing. Now, it is an equally remarkable, and more blessed thing, that under the gospel, there is no amen to the curses, the only amen is to the blessings. "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." No amen. There is no amen to the curse under the gospel. But "all the promises of God are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus." Now, the "Amen,"—and here I am greatly indebted to good old Thomas Adams—means four things. First, it is *the desire of the heart*, "Behold, I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We say amen at the end of the prayer, to signify, "Lord, let it be so,"—it is our heart's desire. Now, brethren, give me your hearts, then—for it is all a heart-matter here. "To him be glory both now and for ever, Amen." Is that your heart's desire? If not, you cannot say amen to it. Does your heart long, pant, thirst, groan, and cry out after Christ, so that you *can* say, every time you bend your knee, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen." Can you say, "Amen, Lord, let thy kingdom come." Brethren, if you can say it in this sense, if it be your heart's desire that Christ's glory should be extended, and his kingdom should come, say "Amen," aloud this morning. Now join with me, for my heart glows with it. I can say it,—and the Judge of all knows how my heart longs to see Jesus magnified; join with me then, ye who can

do it honestly, while I repeat the doxology—"To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

[The congregation very heartily, aloud said, "Amen."]

So be it Lord. Thou hearest thy Church as it cries "Amen;" verily, it is our heart's desire.

"Amen, with joy divine, let earth's
Unnumber'd myriads cry;
Amen, with joy divine, let heaven's
Unnumber'd choirs reply."

But it signifies more than this; it means *the affirmation of our faith.* We only say amen to that which we really believe to be true. We add our affidavit as it were to God's promise, that we believe him to be faithful and true. Have you any doubts but that Jesus Christ is glorious now and for ever? Do you doubt his being glorified of angels, cherubim and seraphim, to-day? And do you not believe, my brethren, that they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and that his enemies shall lick the dust? If you so believe, if you have faith to-day amid the world's obstinacy and the sinner's pride, amid abounding superstition and dominant evil, if you have faith still to believe that Christ shall be glorious for ever and ever, then join with me and again say Amen. "To him be glory both now and for ever, Amen." [The congregation again said "Amen."]

Lord, thou hearest it, though it is a feebler cry than aforetime, for there are more who can desire it than there are who believe it. Nevertheless, thou abidest faithful.

"This little seed from heaven
Shall soon become a tree;
This ever-blessed leaven
Diffused abroad must be:
Till God the Son shall come again,
It must go on. Amen! Amen."

But there is yet a third meaning to this amen; it often expresses *the joy of the heart.* When of old they brought forth a Jewish king, the High Priest took a horn of oil and poured it on his head; then came forward a herald, and the moment he had sounded the trumpet, one with a loud voice said, "God save the king! God save the king!" and all the people said "Amen," and one shout went up to heaven, while with joy of heart they saluted the king in whom they hoped to see a prosperous ruler through whom God would bless them and make them victorious. Now, what say you? As you see King Jesus sitting upon Mount Zion with death and hell beneath his feet, as to day you anticipate the glory of his Advent, as to day you are expecting the time when you shall reign with him for ever and ever, does not your heart say "Amen?" I can remember, in a season of the greatest darkness of mind and weakness of body, there was one text which used to cheer me beyond all measure; there was nothing in the text about myself; it was no promise to *me*, but it was something about *him.* It was this—"Him hath God highly exalted and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee

should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Oh! it seemed so joyous that *he* was exalted. What did it matter what became of me? What did it signify what should become of all of us? King David is worth ten thousand of us. Let our name perish, but let his name last for ever. Brethren, this morning I bring forth the King to you. I bring him before the eyes of your faith to-day; I proclaim him king again, and do you if you desire him to be king, and if you rejoice in his reign, say "Amen." Here, here he stands in vision before your eyes. Crown him! Crown him! Lo, he is to-day crowned afresh. "To him be glory both now and for ever." Joyous hearts lift up your voices, and with one accord say "Amen." [The congregation again said "Amen."] Amen, Lord, be thou King in the midst of us all.

"Yea, amen, let all adore thee,
High on thine exalted throne!
Saviour, take thy power and glory;
Claim the kingdoms for thine own:
O come quickly!
Hallelujah! Come, Lord, come."

But, lastly, and this is a very solemn point. Amen is sometimes used in scripture as an amen of resolution. It means, "I, in the name of God, solemnly pledge myself that in his strength I will seek to make it so; to him be glory both now and for ever." Now I shall not want you to say "Amen" to this *aloud*, but I shall pause to let you say it silently in your own souls by-and-bye. I walked last week through the long galleries which vanity has dedicated to all the glories of France. You pass through room after room where especially you see the triumphs of Napoleon in writhing bodies, and in the blood, and vapour, and smoke. Surely as you walk through the pages of Scripture, you walk through a much more marvellous picture gallery, in which you see the glories of Christ. This book contains the memorials of his honours. In another place in Paris there stands a column made with the cannons taken by the Emperor in battle. A mighty trophy, certainly. O Jesus! thou hast a better than this; a trophy made of souls forgiven; of eyes which wept, but whose tears have been wiped away; of broken hearts that have been healed, and of saved souls that for evermore rejoice. But what trophies Christ has to make him glorious, both now and for ever; trophies of living hearts that love him; trophies of immortal spirits who find their heaven in gazing upon his beauties! What must the glories of Christ be for ever when you and I and all the ten thousand millions he has bought with his blood shall be in heaven. Oh! when we have been there many a thousand years we shall feel as fresh a rapture as when we came there, and if our spirits should be sent on any errand from our Master, and we should have to leave the presence-chamber for a moment, oh! with what wings of a dove we will fly back to behold his face again. When we shall all surround that throne, what songs will I give him, the chief of sinners saved by blood! What hymns will you give him; you who have had your iniquities cleansed and are to day saved? What praise will all those multitudes give him who have all been partakers of his grace? But this has more to do with "for

ever." Now, what say you about our glorifying him *now?* Oh, brothers and sisters, do you make it your prayer this morning, "Lord, help me to glorify thee; I am poor, help me to glorify thee by contentment; I am sick, help me to give thee honour by patience; I have talents, help me to extol thee by spending them for thee; I have time, Lord, help me to redeem it, that I may serve thee; I have a heart to feel, Lord, let that heart feel no love but thine, and glow with no flame, but affection for thee; I have a head to think, Lord help me to think *of* thee and *for* thee; thou hast put me in this world for something, Lord, show me what that is, and help me to work out my life-purpose; for I do desire to say amen. I cannot do much; my amen is but a feeble one, but as the widow put in her two mites, which made a farthing, which was all her living, so, Lord, I put my time and eternity too into thy treasury; 'tis all thine; take it, and thus I say, 'Amen' to Peter's apostolical doxology."

And now, throughout this year will you go forth, my brothers and sisters, and say, amen to this? I pray you do so. You who love not Christ, cannot say amen. Remember you are under the law. There is an amen to all the curses to you; there is none to the blessings while you are under the law. O poor sinner, under the law, may this be the day when thy law-slavery shall come to an end! "How can it be?" you say. By faith in Christ, I answer. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Oh that thou mayest believe on him, and then thy joyful heart will say, amen. Then wilt thou say, "Loudest of all the saints in heaven, I will shout amen, when I see the royal crown brought forth, and Jesus is acknowledged Lord of all." May God grant that this year may be the best year this Church has ever had. This year concludes eight years of my ministry among you, and seven years of Printed Sermons are now before the public. How much of blessedness God has caused to pass through our mind, and how much he has been pleased to own his Word, we cannot fully measure. But we know that he *has* been with us in deed and in truth. Now that we begin this year, may the Lord make it so that all the past shall seem to be as nothing compared with that which is to come. I bless you my brothers and sisters in the name of the Lord, and commencing this year, I beg again for renewed tokens of your affection by a renewal of your prayers; and on my part, I only trust that it may be mine through this year, and long as I live, to be giving my amen to that doxology—"To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

It is earnestly hoped that every subscriber will labour to increase the circulation of these Sermons, now that the type is new, clear, and readable. May God increase their usefulness in answer to fervent prayer.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A CURE FOR CARE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 12TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."—1 Peter v. 7.

No one precept contains the whole of a believer's duty; but usually in Scripture, the precepts rise one above the other, like those stone steps by which the traveller in Egypt ascends to the pinnacle of the pyramid. Ye must first plant your feet firmly upon the preceding duty, before ye shall be able fully to climb to the next command. Let me, then, call your attention to the precept which precedes my text: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." You know, beloved, that there are some selfish, carnal cares which we must not cast upon God; it were an insult to him; it were an act of infamy on our part if we should venture to ask for his assistance in them. Those are cares which would never molest us at all if we were obedient to the precept: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." This cuts off the head at once of many of those anxieties into which Christians sometimes fall. For instance, covetous cares—if I desire to get and grasp more than is absolutely necessary, that I may hastily grow rich, I cannot on my knees ask God to carry this care for me, because it is none of his sending. He has taught me to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," and he has given me a blessed example in Agur, that I may pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches;" but I cannot go on my knees before God, honestly, as a miser, and ask that he would enable me to add house to house, and field to field. But then, that care I never ought to indulge, and I never should endure it if I attended to the precept, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." There is, also, the care of ambition, when men desire to attain honours, eminence, and fame; to stand foremost, to be exalted upon the pinnacle, to be looked up to by all, and to be almost adored by some. But if we allow ambition to creep into our minds, we cannot go to God with it. It is a care which we dare not cast on God, for that were to empty the filth of our house upon the altar of God's sanctuary. But then, I say, it is a care which would never fret us, if our souls were lowly before the Lord.

There are those cares too, which we make for ourselves—those anxieties which anticipate the future—those foolish fears which are only created in our brain, and which vex the head, and then fret the heart—we cannot ask God to take those upon himself; cares which have no existence except in our own fancies, we can scarcely cast on God. But then, beloved, we should never have them if we "humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God." Then, in such a state of subjection to the divine will, and of resignation to the eternal purpose, our soul would sit in quiet and be still, and our spirit would not agitate itself with frivolities which it has itself imagined, with fancies which have no origin but in its own imagination. Oh that ye may have grace to obey the preceding command, and then I think, without any limitation, I may address you in the words of the text: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." I repeat, sinful cares we cannot cast on God; but then, obeying the precept, "Humble yourselves," would uproot such vexations. He that is down, need fear no fall. He whose soul is even as a weaned child will fret and cry no more.

In addressing you this morning from so rich a text as this, I would rather pray that the Holy Spirit may deliver you from carefulness, than attempt to deliver you from it myself, for I am not even able to obey this precept myself, much less shall I enable you to do it. Only when the Spirit of God is upon the preacher can *he* cast his cares upon his God, and he is convinced by experience, that only as the Holy Ghost shall enable you, will *you* be able to do the same. However, that our word may be the means of your comfort and of your strengthening, let us speak on this wise. First, for a few minutes, *let us expound this disease of care*, giving some description of it; secondly, *let us manifest the blessed remedy of the text*, endeavouring in God's name, to apply it; and lastly, *let us hold out the sweet inducement of the second part of the sentence*, in order that believers may be led to attempt the practising of the precept, "He careth for you."

I. First, then, LET US ENDEAVOUR TO DESCRIBE THE DISEASE OF CARE.

The care mentioned in the text, even though it be exercised upon legitimate objects, (and in this it differs from the cares of which I spoke just now, which were cares concerning wrong objects;) care even when exercised upon legitimate objects if carried to excess, hath in itself *the nature of sin*. This will be clear if you think for a moment that anything which is a transgression of God's command is sin, and if there were no other command, the one in our text being broken would involve us in iniquity. But it is a precept earnestly repeated by our Saviour many times, it is one which the apostles have reiterated again and again, and one which cannot be neglected without involving transgression. Besides, the very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting of ourselves into his place, to do for him that which we dream he either cannot or will not do; we attempt to think of that which we fancy he will forget; or we labour to take upon ourselves that burden which he either is not able or willing to carry for us. Now, this impertinence, this presumption, what if I say, this audacity, has in it the very nature of sin, to

attempt to know better than God, to snatch from his hand the helm by which he guides affairs, to attempt to correct his charts, to remap his providence, this indeed is such an impertinence that as the guardian Scripture pushes back the intruder, it demands of him, "Art thou also one of the King's counsel? What doest thou here? He took no counsel with thee when he made the heavens and the earth and balanced the clouds, and stretched out the skies like a tent to dwell in, how darest thou come hither and offer advice to perfect wisdom, and aid to omnipotent strength?" There is in anxious care the very nature of sin.

But, further, these anxious cares very frequently lead to other sins, sometimes to *overt acts of transgression*. The tradesman who is not able to leave his business with God, may be tempted to indulge in the tricks of trade; nay, he may not only be tempted, but he may be prevailed upon to put out an unholy hand with which to help himself. The professional or literary man, if he has no firm trust in providence, may lend his skill to indirect and unlawful ends; and each man if he have no other snare, will be tried with this—to forsake prayer and to forget the promise in order to trust to the wisdom of a friend, or to the natural sagacity of some mentor in whom he puts confidence. Now, this is forsaking the fountain to go to the broken cisterns, a crime which was laid against Israel of old, a wrath provoking iniquity. Even if it led to no other act save this sin of preferring the counsel of man to the direction of God, excessive anxiety were to be reprobated and detested. But think, my brethren, of the many sins which our anxieties engender in our hearts. Our unbelief which makes us doubt our God, our want of love which is proven by our distrust of love, our want of hope which puts out our eyes so that we cannot see the clear shining after the rain. Think, my brethren, how we fret and mistrust and thus vex the Spirit of God, and often cause him to depart from us, so that our prayers are hindered, so that our example is marred, so that we give ourselves rather to self-seeking than to seeking God. All these things are sins, the grapes of Gomorrha which grow on the vines of our cares. These base-born cares are the plentiful mothers of transgressions. Distrust is the egg out of which many a mischief is hatched; we indulge in these cares and think surely we are doing no wrong, whereas the indulgence in them is in itself a crime, and is besides a tempter which guides us onward to the commission of other iniquities, for the man that is full of care is ripe for any sin, but he who has cast his care on God standeth securely, neither shall the evil one be able to touch him.

To proceed further in uncovering this disease. As it is in itself sin, and the mother of sin, we note again that *it brings misery*, for where sin is, sorrow shall soon follow. He who would have his spirit bowed down even to the very earth, has only to fix his thoughts upon himself and his circumstances, instead of looking to God and his promises. Some of you are placed in a very happy position in life, but my dear brethren, you can make yourselves miserable if you please. Others of you are put in what the world considers unhappy circumstances, but if God enable you, you can be supremely blessed. Poverty does not necessarily involve sorrow, nor do riches of themselves bring peace or

happiness. If any of you wish for misery you need not go out of your own house, there is no need to travel far for causes of discontent; you can be surfeited with plenty and be poor; you can dwell in the midst of peace and be disturbed; you can possess the richest prosperity and yet be afflicted. We, to a very great extent make our own position. God ordains providence, and either grace makes us happy, or sin racks us with pain. God does not make our misery; the cause of our trouble lies at our own door, not at his. Do you see that Christian there with the sparkling eye, and the light footstep, the man who is swift to run upon his Master's errands? that man has many troubles; but when he wakes in the morning if he retains remembrance of them, he bows his knee and leaves them with his God: he goes home, and the day has had much of sorrow in it, but he shakes the weight from his own shoulder and leaves his burden upon God. That man, with all his troubles, is more blessed than yonder professor, who has very little to vex him except that he vexes himself, by making every little thing a ground for fretfulness, magnifying every small mischance into a strange calamity, and by losing all patience, when all things suit not his proud will and dainty taste. Oh brethren! it is an ill thing for Christians to be sad. Let them rejoice, "Rejoice in the Lord always," but they never can so long as they indulge in anxious cares.

Besides this, these anxious cares do not only lead us into sin, and destroy our peace of mind, but they also *weaken us for usefulness.* When one has left all his cares at home, how well he can work for his Master, but when those cares tease us in the pulpit, it is hard preaching the gospel. When cares buzz in the ear, the music of grace is hard to hear. What would you say of your workman who should come to you in the morning with a heavy piece of family furniture upon his back. He calls himself your porter, he is about to carry your goods, and you see him going out of the door with your load, which is properly proportioned to his strength, but beside that he is carrying a heavy piece of his own upon his shoulders. You say to him, "My good man, what are you doing there?" "Oh sir, I am only loaded with household stuff." I think you would say, "Well, but you are not fit to do my work which you are engaged to do. I do not employ you to carry your own load, I had you here to carry mine." "But sir," says he, "I am so weak, I cannot carry both." "Then leave yours alone," say you, "and carry mine." Or to use another simile. There was a great king who once employed a merchant in his service as an ambassador to Foreign courts. Now the merchant before he went away, said to the king, "My own business requires all my care, and though I am always willing to be your majesty's servant, yet if I attend to your business as I ought, I am sure my own will be ruined." "Well," said the king, "you take care of my business, and I will take care of yours. Use your best endeavours, and I will answer for it that you shall be nothing the loser for the zeal which you take from yourself to give to me." And so our God says to us, as his servants, "Do my work, and I will do yours. Serve me and I will serve you." Like Peter,—Peter is fishing, Christ needs a pulpit to preach in. He borrows Peter's boat, and preaches in it; well what about Peter's fishing? Oh the Master

will take care of that, for no sooner is the sermon done than he says, "Launch into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught," and Peter gets more in ten minutes through having lent his boat to his Master, than he might have done in ten weeks, if he had been fishing on his own account. Leave your cares with God, and care for him,

"Make you *his* service your delight,
Your wants shall be *his* care."

The subject would not be complete if I did not add that these carking cares, of whose guilt perhaps we think so little, *do very great damage to our blessed and holy cause.* Your sad and miserable countenances hinder souls who are anxious, and they present a ready excuse for souls who are careless. "Look," say they, "look, that man is a Christian man, the whole of the winters of a century have left their stormrifts on his forehead, and all the winds of ages seem to have ruffled his brow, he has no peace, no joy;—Who would be a Christian to be so miserable?" Thus the careless man says he will not have hell here, he will leave that for hereafter, while even anxious spirits say, "It cannot be that this religion is true, for if it were really true one would think it would be able to support its followers in the troubles of life. If God's Word be true that God will sustain his people, then Christians would be sustained, and believers would be cheered and comforted; but I see that they are as much fretful as other men, as impatient as they are, and that So-and-so, who makes a profession, is quite as weak, quite as easily bowed before the storm as yonder man who has no God in whom to trust, and no promises on which to lean." Ah! let it not be said so Christian through you; open not the enemy's mouth to blaspheme; let not the dragon find food through you who are of the seed of the woman, but rather seek, casting your care on God, to disentangle yourself of all personal hindrances that you may be avenged upon your Master's adversaries as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. I close the description of this matter by saying that in the most frightful manner cares have brought many to the poisoned cup, the halter, and the knife, and hundreds to the madhouse. What makes the constant increase of our lunatic asylums; why is it that in almost every country in England new asylums have to be erected, wing after wing being added to these buildings in which the imbecile and the raving are confined? It is because we *will* carry what we have no business to carry—our own cares, and until there shall be a general keeping of the day of rest throughout England, and until there shall be a more general resting of our souls and all we have upon God, we must expect to hear of increasing suicides and increasing lunacies. So long as the present system of competition in business shall continue—and there seems no hope that it will ever cease, for rather the signs of the times forbode that the battle will grow sterner every day—it will become a more stern duty with each of us to cast our care on God, unless we would see reason reel, and would be howling maniacs in our cells. Oh, for your own sake and for your children's sake, for Christ's sake and for his Church's sake, I pray you spoil not the fair house which God has builded, cast not out the lovely tenant, leave not the temple of the Lord to be the prison-house of madness. Away with evil cares if you would still be a man.

II. I shall now want your attention to the second part of the subject, THE BLESSED REMEDY TO BE APPLIED.

Somebody must carry these cares. If I cannot do it myself, can I find any one who will? My Father who is in heaven stands waiting to be my burden-bearer. With broad shoulders, with omnipotence as his strength, he says "My child, roll thy burden upon thy God." Blessed privilege, dare I neglect it; can I be wicked enough to reject it and to bear my cares myself. Here is the blessed remedy, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he will sustain thee."

Now in order rather to apply this remedy than to describe it, by the help of God's Holy Spirit I will mention some of those fears, those cares which are legitimate enough in their objects, but which can only be relieved by leaving them with God. One of the first and most natural cares with which we are vexed is *the care for daily bread.* "I should be content" says one "with food and raiment; if I can but provide things honest in the sight of all men, and see my family cared for, I shall then be happy." "But" saith one, "what shall I eat, what shall I drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed? without a situation, having therefore no opportunity to earn my livelihood; without substance, having therefore nothing to look upon by which I may be supported without labour; without friend or patron who might give me his generous assistance; what shall I do?" You are a Christian are you; you must use all diligence, that is your duty: but oh, if God shall help you, mingle no fretfulness with the diligence, no impatience with your suffering, and no distrust with your trials. No, remember what Jesus has said so sweetly to the point, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you That even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Such a care as that I say is natural enough, and to bid a man shake it off when he is in actual need is cruelly absurd, unless you have a sure consolation to offer him; but you can say, "Cast your trial upon God." Use your most earnest endeavours, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; if you cannot do one thing do another; if you cannot earn your bread as a gentleman earn it as a poor man; if you cannot earn it by the sweat of your brains do it by the sweat of your brow, do something for an honest living; sweep a crossing if you cannot do anything else, for if a man will not work neither let him eat; but having brought yourself to that, if still every door is shut, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Business men, who have not exactly to hunt for the necessaries of life, are often tormented with the anxieties of large transactions and extended commerce. The failures of others, frequent bad debts, changes in the markets, monetary pressures, and sudden panics, cause a world of trouble. Through our fashion of credit in this age, it is very hard for a Christian to conduct business in the sober substantial fashion which a tender conscience would prefer. "Owe no man anything,"—if that could be interwoven into the system of trade, it would I do not doubt, cure ten thousand ills which now grow out of that credit system, which seems to be unavoidable, but which I am sure involves many of the crimes which are committed, and very much of the care which racks business men. Well, through the present high-pressure system of trade there is naturally much care. If any man here can say that he can go into his office having many in his employ, and never at all have care, I should think he must be a *rara avis* in the world, surely he might walk till he dropped with weariness before he would meet with another of the same order. But if there be a brother here who has a business so extensive that he does not sleep at night, that he lies there tossing on his bed, thinking about this servant who may have robbed him, or about that vessel that is out at sea, or about the low prices of a certain article which has gone down since he laid in a large stock, and all those little things which all of you know—then I say, "Brother, hold hard here, what are you doing? what are you doing? Are you sure that in this you have used your best prudence and wisdom, and your best industry, and given it your best attention?" "Yes." Well then, what more have you to do? Suppose you like to weep all night, will that keep your ship from going on the Goodwin sands? Suppose you could cry your eyes out, will that make a thief honest? Suppose you could fret yourself till you could not eat, would that raise the price of goods? One would think if you were just to say, "Well, I have done all that is to be done, now I will leave it with God," that you might go about your business and have the full use of your senses to attend to it. Whereas now, you fritter away your senses, and then commit blunders, and so multiply your troubles by that very fretfulness by which you hoped to remove them. There—let them alone! We say, "Leave well alone," but I say, "Leave ill alone," leave them both alone, and with your two hands, for you will want both hands to do it,—with the hand of prayer, "In everything by prayer and supplication, making known your wants unto God," and with the other hand, the hand of faith, trusting in God—lift your load right off from your own shoulders, and let the whole crushing weight be left with your eternal God, for "he will sustain thee, he will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Another anxiety of a personal kind which is very natural, and indeed very proper if it be not carried to excess, is the care of your *children*. Blessed be God for our children. We do not sympathise with those who look upon them as afflictions, for we believe them still to be a heritage of the Lord. But what anxieties they involve, how shall we bring them up, how shall they be provided for? Will they honour their parents, or will they bring disgrace upon the name they bear? A child may be the greatest curse his parents ever had, while he may be their choicest

comfort. "All these," as an old puritan said, "are doubtful blessings, and may be certain curses," yet I will not have it that there is any doubt about their being blessings, as God sends them. A Christian parent must have care about his children, and all the more because he is a Christian, since he will not be satisfied with their getting on in business, he will never be content till his children walk in the truth. Mother, father, you have prayed for your children, you trust you have set them a holy example, you labour day by day to teach them the truth as it is in Jesus; you have travailed in birth for their souls till Christ be formed in them; it is well, now let your souls quietly expect the blessing, leave your offspring with God; cast your sons and daughters upon their father's God; let no impatience intrude if they are not converted in your time, and let no distrust distract your mind if they should seem to belie your hopes. I met yesterday with a few verses, which sound like the warblings of an American songstress; they exactly suit my subject, and in reading them in private they have touched my heart. Excuse me therefore, if though I never read a sermon, I should for once read a part of one.

"The Master has come over Jordan,"
Said Hannah, the mother, one day;
"He is healing the people who throng Him,
With a touch of His finger, they say.
And now I shall carry the children,
Little Rachel, and Samuel, and John;
I shall carry the baby, Esther,
For the Lord to look upon."

The father looked at her kindly,
But he shook his head, and smiled:
"Now, who but a doating mother
Would think of a thing so wild?
If the children were tortured by demons,
Or dying of fever 'twere well;
Or had they the taint of the leper,
Like many in Israel."

"Nay, do not hinder me, Nathan;
I feel such a burden of care:
If I carry it to the Master,
Perhaps I shall leave it there.
If He lay His hand on the children,
My heart will be lighter, I know:
For a blessing for ever and ever
Will follow them as they go."

So, over the hills of Judah,
Along by the vine-rows green,
With Esther asleep on her bosom,
And Rachel her brothers between;
'Mong the people who hung on His teaching,
Or waited His touch and His word,
Through the row of proud Pharisees listening,
She pressed to the feet of the Lord.

"Now, why should'st thou hinder the Master,"
Said Peter, "with children like these?
Seest not how, from morning till evening,
He teacheth and healeth disease?"

Then Christ said, "Forbid not the children,
Permit them to come unto Me!"
And He took in His arms little Esther,
And Rachel He set on His knee;

And the heavy heart of the mother
Was lifted all earth-care above,
As He laid His hands on the brothers,
And blest them with tenderest love;
As He said of the babes in His bosom,
"Of such are the kingdom of heaven;"
And strength for all duty and trial
That hour to her spirit was given.

Thus do ye, and thus inherit the blessing.

But each Christian will in his time have personal troubles of a higher order, namely, *spiritual cares*. He is begotten again unto a lively hope, but he fears that his faith will yet die. He hopes he has some spark of spiritual joy, but there are dark and dreary nights which lower over him, and he fears that his lamp will die out in darkness. As yet he has been victorious, but he trembles lest he should one day fall by the hand of the enemy. Beloved, I beseech thee; cast this care upon God for he careth for you. "I am persuaded that he that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ." He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Why, one might keep you all this morning, and this afternoon and evening too, repeating the precious promises of God, and we might close them all by saying,

"What more can he say than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge hath fled?"

Away then with dark suspicions and anxieties! Is it care about past sin? "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Is it present temptation? "There hath no temptation happened to you but such as is common to men: but God who is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Is it future peril? O leave thou that with him, for neither "things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If you begin to think always of yourself, you must be miserable. Why, it is Christ that makes you what you are before the eyes of God; look then to Jesus in order to find out what you are in God's esteem. Soul, I say again look at Christ, and not at yourself. Never let anxieties about

sanctification destroy your confidence of justification. What if you be a sinner! Christ died to save sinners. What if you be undeserving! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Grace is free. The invitation is still open to you; rest the whole burden of your soul's salvation where it must rest. Do not be an Uzza, lay no hasty hand upon the ark of the Lord; above all, do not be an Uzziah, attempt not to offer sacrifices or usurp the priesthood, for Christ must stand for you, you cannot stand or do for yourself. Cast, then, your care on him, for he careth for you.

I shall want your patient attention two or three minutes more, while trying to apply this remedy, when I notice that there are many cares not of a personal but rather of an *ecclesiastical* character, which often insinuate themselves and plead for life, but which must nevertheless be put away. I am sorry to confess, that if I do not preach to any one else this morning, I shall now be preaching to myself. There are cares about *how God's work is to be carried on.* I know a foolish young man who lies awake many nights thinking about that, and who sometimes by day makes himself foolishly sad, because with large purposes of heart and with great designs in his soul he sees not the way by which they are to be carried out, and has not yet attained the faith which

> "Laughs at impossibilities,
> And says, 'It shall be done.'"

If any of you are suffering from the same sad disease, let me exhort you from the words of Peter, to cast the care about God's work *upon God.* He never sent us a warfare at our own charge; he never did require us to do *his* work; that he will attend to himself; and we ought to feel that if God does not enable us to do as much as we would, it is a blessed thing to be enabled and permitted to do as much as we can. If we think there are few men to work, or little means with which to work, we must not be fretful about where the means, or the men shall come from. We may properly pray, "Lord, send labourers," and with equal propriety we may ask that he who has the silver and the gold, may give them for his own work; but after that we must cast our care on God. Then, if we get over that, there will be another anxiety,—one which frets me often enough—which is, *the success of God's work.* Oh! when there are souls converted, how our heart leaps for joy; when the Church keeps continually increasing, how glad we are! But if there is even a little lull, we feel so sad; if we do not see God's arm always bare, we are ready to lie down and say, "Lord, let me die, I am no better than my fathers." When we are in a low state of body and heart too, that weakening sickness of unbelief, like the woman's issue of blood, comes over us, and we feel that life is ebbing as success decreases. Now, this is a care we must cast on God. Husbandman, your Great Employer sent you out to sow the seed, but if no grain of it should ever come up, if you sowed the seed as he told you, and where he told you, he will never lay the blame of a defective harvest to you. It is ours to preach, but to convert souls is God's; it is ours to labour, but the success depends alone on him. "They that go through the valley of Baca make

it a well,"—that is *their* business, to dig wells—"the rain also filleth the pools,"—it is not their business to fill the wells; and the wells do not get full from the bottom as they do in our country, it is the rain that fills the pools,—the blessing comes from on high; and if we have dug the wells, and we have prayed six times, and as yet the rain has not descended, go again seven times, and the rain shall yet descend, and the pools shall be filled to the brim. Do not, therefore, let us have cares about success.

And sometimes there is another care, it is the care lest some little slip made by ourselves or others should give cause to the enemy to blaspheme. There are devils besides those in hell, there are some on earth; and some of these are too glad to find an opportunity, if there be a word that is ever so fitly spoken, to wrest it out of its connection and make stock and capital for blasphemy out of it. It is an easy task and one which any fool can accomplish, but this world is full of fools who are glad to find dirt to eat, and then having eaten it themselves to cram it down others throats. One is sometimes afraid to walk for fear of breaking something in such a frail world as this; afraid to speak, lest we should say something which might open the enemy's mouth. A careful jealousy is very well if it leads to caution, but very ill if it leads to a carking, weak anxiety. What have you and I to do with what the enemy may do? if the Lord does not chain the devil I am sure we cannot, and if he does not shut the mouths of liars, I do not know that we ought to wish he would; for if he lets them open their mouths I have no doubt they are best open. Many a time, as Christ rode into Jerusalem on the back of an ass, the truth has ridden into the midst of Jerusalem in triumph on the back of its most despicable enemies. Beyond doubt, Christ has been lifted up even on the point of the spear, and the light of the gospel has beamed like a beacon from the stake where the martyr perished. Well, let us leave our enemies to do what they will, and only stand fast to the Lord and cast our care on him.

And then, one is so afraid of being unfaithful at the last, lest the blood of souls should be on our skirts. Oh! that thought has dashed me on my forehead on the floor many and many a time. This heavy burden crushes me into the most pitiable state, until the body sympathises with the mind so fully, that if you could see me with the tears running from my eyes, and the cold sweat starting from my head, you would say, "What a creature is that to go forth and preach." The thought of having all of you to address, and that I must be faithful or else your blood shall be required at my hands, is so awful a one that in private I never dare to think of it, for it utterly unmans me. But oh, blessed be God, if he has enabled us to do all we can by his Spirit, we must leave it there. We know that he will not ask more of us than he has given to us, and if he has helped us so far, his shall be the glory; but if we have failed, even that too shall be washed away through the precious blood, and with all his weight of responsibility the minister shall yet enter heaven and find a place amongst the sanctified.

III. I close my last point upon which only a word, of THE SWEET INDUCEMENT TO LEAVE YOUR BURDEN: "He careth for you."

Believe in an universal providence, the Lord cares for ants and angels,

for worms and for worlds; he cares for cherubim and for sparrows, for seraphim and for insects. Cast your care on him, he that calleth the stars by their names, and leadeth them out by numbers, by their hosts. "Why sayest thou, Oh Jacob, and thinkest Oh Israel, my way is passed over from God and he has utterly forgotten me?" Let his universal providence cheer you. Think next of his particular providence over all the saints. "Precious shall their blood be in his sight." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Let the fact that while he is the Saviour of all men, he is specially the Saviour of them that believe, let that cheer and comfort you, that special providence which watches over the chosen, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." And then, thirdly, let the thought of his special love *to you* be the very essence of your comfort. "I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." God says, that as much to you, as he said it to any saint of old. "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Oh! I would beloved, that the Holy Ghost would make you feel the promise as being spoken to *you;* out of this vast assembly forget the rest and only think of yourself, for the promises are unto you, meant for you. Oh! grasp them. It is ill to get into a way of reading Scripture for the whole Church, read it for yourselves, and specially hear the Master say to you this morning, "Let not *your* heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." Think that ye hear him say, "I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith fail not." Think thou seest him walking on the waters of thy trouble, for he is there and he is saying, "Fear not, it is I, be not afraid." Oh! those sweet words of Christ! Lord speak them to me; speak them to thy poor sorrowing child yonder; speak them to each one of us; speak them to us, and let us hear thy voice and say, "Jesus whispers consolation, I cannot refuse it, I will sit under his shadow with great delight."

Sinners, ungodly persons here, you know not God. I send you away when I have said this one thing. What a blessed thing it is to be a Christian, to have some one who will take your cares for you! Why, you know you will have your cares whether you are Christians or not, you are sure to have troubles even in the world, but then you have no Christ! to comfort you, no God to sustain you, no promise to cheer you; you have the darkness without the lamp, you have to die without the immortality to follow. Oh that you knew what a Christian is, and your mouths would be a watering to know the Christian's privilege. But I say to you, cast your sins upon Christ. Jesus Christ can take them. If thou believest on him there is proof that *he did* take them of old, did carry them and suffered for them in his own person that thou mightest go free. Oh may we each this morning, saint and sinner, come even to the cross, and to the throne of grace, and say, "Lord, unload us of our burdens of guilt and care, and give us now to go on our way rejoicing," because God, all-sufficient, has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GRACE EXALTED—BOASTING EXCLUDED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 19TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."—Romans iii. 27.

PRIDE is most obnoxious to God. As a sin, his holiness hates it; as a treason, his sovereignty detests it; as a rebellion, the whole of his attributes stand leagued to put it down. God has touched other sins with his finger, but against this vice he has made bare his arm. There have been, I know, terrible judgments against lust, but there have been ten times as many against that swelling lust of the deceitful heart. Remember, the first transgression had in its essence pride. The ambitious heart of Eve desired to be as God, knowing good and evil, and Adam imagined that he should be lifted up to divine rank if he dared to pluck and eat. The blasting of Paradise, the sterility of the world, the travail of human birth, the sweat of the brow, and the certainty of death, may all be traced to this fruitful mother of mischief, pride. Remember Babel, and how God has scattered us and confounded our tongues. It was man's pride which led him to seek for an undivided monarchy that so he might be great. The tower was to be the rallying-point of all the tribes, and would have been the central throne of all human grandeur, but God has scattered us, that pride might not climb to so high a pitch. Pride, thou hast indeed suffered severe strokes from God. Against thee has he furbished his sword, and prepared his weapons of war. The Lord, even the Lord of hosts hath sworn it, and he will surely stain the pride of all human glory, and tread all boasting as straw is trodden for the dunghill. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let no arrogancy come out of your mouth, for the bows of the mighty have been broken, and the haughtiness of man has been bowed down. Remember Pharaoh and the plagues which God brought on Egypt, and the wonders which he wrought in the field of Zoan. Remember the Red Sea, and Rahab cut, and the dragon broken. Think of Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty architect of Babylon, driven out to eat grass like the oxen till his nails grew like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers. Remember Herod, eaten of worms, because he gave not God the glory; and Sennacherib, with the Lord's hook in his jaws,

turned by the way he came to the place where his sons became his slayers. Time would fail to tell of the innumerable conquerors and emperors and mighty men of earth who have all perished beneath the blast of thy rebuke, O God, because they lifted up themselves and said, "I am, and there is none beside me." He hath turned wise men backward, and made their knowledge foolishness, and no flesh may glory in his presence. Yea, when pride has sought to shelter itself in the hearts of God's chosen people, still the arrows of God have sought it out and have drunk its blood. God loves his servants still, but pride even in them he abhors. David may be a man after God's own heart, but if his pride shall lift him up to number the people, then he shall have a choice between three chastisements, and he shall be fain to choose the pestilence as being the least of the plagues. Or if Hezekiah shall show to the ambassadors of Babylon his riches and his treasures, there shall come to him the rebuke—"What have they seen in thy house?" and the threatening—"Behold they shall take thy sons to make them eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Oh, brethren, forget not that God has uttered the most solemn words as well as issued the most awful judgments against pride. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer." "Pride and arrogancy do I hate." "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud." "The day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." "I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of Hosts." There are hundreds of terrible texts like these, but we cannot now recount them all. Now mark, to put an everlasting stigma upon human vanity, and to hurl once for all mire and filth upon all human glorying, God has ordained that the only way in which he will save men shall be a way which utterly excludes the possibility of man's having a single word to say by way of vaunting. He has declared that the only foundation which he will ever lay shall be one by which man's strength shall be broken in pieces, and by which man's pride shall be humbled in the dust. To this subject I ask your attention this morning. It is to enlarge and amplify the sentiment of the text that I seek. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."

We shall notice first of all, *the rejected plan or law;* then we shall note *the excluded vice;* having so done, we shall notice in the third place, *that the very fact that boasting is excluded permits of the reception of the worst of sinners;* and we shall close by observing *that the same system which excludes boasting includes humble and devout gratitude to God for his grace and mercy.*

I. First, then, THE REJECTED PLAN.

There are two ways by which man might have been for ever blessed. The one was by works:—"This do and thou shalt live; be obedient and receive the reward; keep the commandment and the blessing shall be thine, well earned and surely paid." The only other plan was—"Receive grace and blessedness as the free gift of God; stand as a guilty sinner having no merit, and as a rebellious sinner deserving the very reverse of

goodness, but stand there and receive all thy good things, simply, wholly, and alone of the free love and sovereign mercy of God." Now, the Lord has not chosen the system of works. The word *law* as used twice in the text is employed, it is believed by many commentators, out of compliment to the Jews, who were so fond of the word, that their antagonism might not be aroused; but it means here, as elsewhere in Scripture, plan, system, method. There were two plans, two systems, two methods, two spirits,—the plan of works and the plan of grace. God has once for all utterly refused the plan of merit and of works, and has chosen to bless men only, and entirely through the plan, or method, or law of faith. Now, brethren, we have put the two before you, and we beg you to mark that there is a distinction between the two, which must never be forgotten. Martin Luther says:—"If thou canst rightly distinguish between works and grace, thank God for thy skill, and consider thyself to be an able divine." This indeed is the bottom of theology, and he who can understand this clearly, it seems to me, can never be very heterodox; orthodoxy must surely follow, and the right teaching of God must be understood when we once for all are able to discriminate with accuracy between that which is of man—works, and that which is of God—faith, and grace received by faith. Now, the plan of salvation by works is impossible for us. Even if God had ordained it to be the way by which men should labour to be saved, yet it is certain that none would have been saved by it, and therefore all must have perished. For if thou wouldst be saved by works, remember O man, that the law requires of thee perfection. One single flaw, one offence, and the law condemns thee without mercy. It requires that thou shouldst keep it in every point, and in every sense, and to its uttermost degree, for its demands are rigorous in the extreme. It knows nothing of freely forgiving because thou canst not pay, but like a severe creditor, it takes thee by thy throat, and says, "Pay me all;" and if thou canst not pay even to the uttermost farthing, it shuts thee up in the prison of condemnation, out of which thou canst not come. But if it were possible for you to keep the law in its perfection outwardly, yet, remember, that you would be required to keep it in your heart as well as in your external life. One single motion of the heart from the right, one reception of even the shadow of a passing temptation, so as to become a partaker of sin, would ruin you. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Fail here, and oh! who among us can be such a hypocrite as to think he has not failed ten thousand times!—fail here, and though your life were virtuous, though your exterior were such as even criticism itself must commend, yet you perish because you have not kept the law and yielded its full demands. Remember, too, that it is clear you can never be saved by the law, because if up to this moment your heart and life have been altogether without offence, yet it is required that it should be so even to your dying day. And do you hope that as temptations come upon you thick as your moments, as your trials invade you numerous as the swarms which once thronged from the gates of Thebes, you will be able to stand against all these? Will there not be found some joint in your harness? Will there not be some

moment in which you may be tripped up—some instant when either the eye may wander after lust, or the heart be set on vanity, or the hand stretched out to touch that which is not good? Oh! man, remember, we are not sure that even this life would end that probation, for as long as thou shouldst live and be God's creature, duty would still be due, and the law still thine insatiable creditor. For ever would thy happiness tremble in the scales; even in heaven itself the law would follow thee; even there, as thy righteousness would be thine own, it would never be finished; and even from yonder shining battlements thou mightest fall, and amid those harps, wearing that white robe, if thou wert to be saved by thine own works, there might be a possibility of perishing. The obedience of a creature can never be finished; the duty of a servant of the law is never over. So long as thou wast the creature of God, thy Creator would have demands upon thee. How much better to be accepted in the Beloved, and to wear his finished righteousness as our glory and security. Now in the face of all this, will any of you prefer to be saved by your works? or, rather, will you prefer to be damned by your works? for that will certainly be the issue, let you hope what you may.

Now I suppose that in this congregation we have but very few—there may be some—who would indulge a hope of being saved by the law in itself; but there is a delusion abroad that perhaps God will modify the law, or that at least he will accept a sincere obedience even if it be imperfect; that he will say, "Well, this man has done what he could, and, therefore, I will take what he has given as though it were perfect." Now, remember against this the Apostle Paul declares peremptorily, "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," so that that is answered at once. But more than this, God's law cannot alter, it can never be content to take less from thee than it demands. What said Christ? "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail," and again he expressly said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The law's demands were met and fulfilled for believers by Christ; but as far as those demands are concerned to those who are under it, they are as great, as heavy, and as rigorous as ever they were. Unless his law could be altered, and that is impossible, God cannot accept anything but a perfect obedience; and if you are hoping to be saved by your sincere endeavours to do your best, your hopes are rotten things, delusions, falsehoods, and you will perish wrapped up in the shrouds of your pride. "Yes," some say, "but could it not be partly by grace and partly by works?" No. The apostle says that boasting is excluded, and excluded by the law of faith; but if we let in the law of works in any degree, we cannot shut out boasting, for to that degree you give man an opportunity to congratulate himself as having saved himself. Let me say broadly—to hope to be saved by works is a delusion; to hope to be saved by a method in which grace and works are co-acting, is not merely a delusion, but an absurd delusion, since it is contrary to the very nature of things, that grace and merit should ever mingle and co-work. Our apostle has declared times without number, that

advents of Christ; secondly, *the dissimilarity between them,* which is a far more extensive subject, and then we shall make some few remarks *concerning our personal interest in both advents.*

I. The text asserts very plainly that as we are here twice—once in a life of probation, and a second time in the day of judgment; so Christ shall be here twice—once in his life of suffering, and then again in his hour of triumph, THE TWO COMINGS OF CHRIST HAVE SOME DEGREE OF LIKENESS.

First, they are like each other in the fact *that they are both of them personal comings.* Christ came the first time, not as a spirit, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as he had. He was one who could be pressed to a woman's bosom; one who could be borne in a father's arms. He was one who could afterwards walk in his own person to the temple; one who could bear our sins in his own body on the tree. We have done once for all with the foolish ideas of certain of the early heretics, that Christ's appearance upon earth was but a phantom. We know that he was really, personally, and physically here on earth. But it is not quite so clear to some persons that he is to come really, personally, and literally, the second time. I know there are some who are labouring to get rid of the fact of a personal reign, but as I take it, the coming and the reign are so connected together, that we must have a spiritual coming if we are to have a spiritual reign. Now we believe and hold that Christ shall come a second time suddenly, to raise his saints at the first resurrection; this shall be the commencement of the grand judgment, and they shall reign with him afterwards. The rest of the dead live not till after the thousand years are finished. Then shall they rise from their tombs at the sounding of the trumpet, and their judgment shall come and they shall receive the deeds which they have done in their bodies. Now, we believe that the Christ who shall sit on the throne of his father David, and whose feet shall stand upon Mount Olivet, is as much a personal Christ as the Christ who came to Bethlehem and wept in the manger. We do believe that the very Christ whose body did hang upon the tree shall sit upon the throne; that the very hand that felt the nail shall grasp the sceptre; that the very foot that was fastened to the cross shall tread upon the necks of his foes. We look for the personal advent, the personal reign, the personal session and assize of Christ.

Nor less shall the advents be like each other in the fact *that they shall both be according to promise.* The promise of the first coming of Christ

was that which made glad the early believers. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad." The epitaph inscribed upon the slab which covers the sepulchre of the early saints has written upon it, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." And to-day we believe that Christ is to come according to promise. We think we have abundant evidence in the words that were uttered by the lips of inspired prophets and seers, and more especially from the enraptured pen of John in Patmos. Do they not testify that Christ shall surely come? We now, like Abraham of old, do see his day; our eye catches the coming splendour; our soul is overwhelmed with the approaching glory. Did the Jew look for Messiah, the Prince? So do we. Did he expect him to reign? So do we. In fact, the very Prince for whom Israel now looks in all her hardness of heart, is he whom we expect. They doubt Messiah's first advent and they look for him to come as the fairest among ten thousand, the Prince of the Kings of the earth. Hail, Israel! in this thy Gentile sister is agreed. She looks for him to come in the self-same form and fashion, and when his coming shall have removed the scales from the blind eyes of Israel's tribes, then the fulness of the Gentiles shall with Abraham's seed praise and magnify the Lamb once slain, who comes the second time as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In both cases we think the advent of Christ fully promised.

But we must remark in the next place, that the second advent of Christ will be like the first *in its being unexpected by the mass of people.* When he came before, there were only a few looking for him. Simeon and Anna, and some humble souls of the sort knew that he was about to come. The others knew that the patriarchs and prophets of their nation had foretold his birth; but the vanity of their thoughts, and the conduct of their lives were at such entire variance with the creed to which they were trained, they cared nothing for him. The Magi might come from the distant East, and the shepherds from the adjacent plains, but how little sensation did they make in the streets of busy Jerusalem, in the halls of kings, or in the homes of business. The kingdom of God came not with observation. In such an hour as they thought not the Son of Man came. And now, though we have the words of Scripture to assure us that he will come quickly, and that his reward is with him and his work before him, yet how few expect him! The coming of some foreign Prince, the approach of some great event

if it be of grace it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. It must be either one or the other. These two cannot be married, for God forbids the banns. He will have it all grace or all works, all of Christ or all of man; but for Christ to be a make-weight, for Christ to supplement your narrow robes by patching on a piece of his own, for Christ to tread a part of the wine-press, and for you to tread the rest; oh! this can never be. God will never be yoked with the creature. You might link an angel with a worm and bid them fly together, but God with the creature—the precious blood of Jesus with the foul ditch-water of our human merits—never, never. Our paste gems, our varnished falsehoods, our righteousnesses which are but filthy rags, put with the real, true, precious, everlasting, divine things of Christ! Never! Unless heaven should blend in alliance with hell, and holiness hold dalliance with impurity! It must be one or the other, either man's merit absolutely and alone, or unmixed, unmerited favour from the Lord. Now, I suppose if I were to labour never so arduously to hunt out this evil spirit from the sons of men, I should miss it still, for it hides in so many shapes, and therefore let me say, that in no shape, in no sense, in no single case, and in no degree whatsoever, are we saved by our works or by the law. I say in no sense, because men make such shifts to save alive their own righteousness. I will show you one man who says, "Well, I don't expect to be saved by my honesty; I don't expect to be saved by my generosity, nor by my morality; but then, I have been baptized; I receive the Lord's Supper; I have been confirmed; I go to church, or I have a sitting in a meeting-house; I am, as touching the ceremonies, blameless." Well, friend, in that sense you cannot be saved by works, for all these things have no avail whatever upon the matter of salvation, if you have not faith. If you are saved, God's ordinances will be blessed things to you, but if you are not a believer you have no right to them; and with regard to Baptism and the Supper, every time you touch them you increase your guilt. Whether it be Baptism or the Lord's Supper, you have no right to either, except you be saved already, for they are both ordinances for believers, and for believers only. These ordinances are blessed means of grace to living, quickened, saved souls; but to unsaved souls, to souls dead in trespasses and sins, these outward ordinances can have no avail for good, but may increase their sin, because they touch unworthily the holy things of God. Oh! repose not in these; oh! dream not that a priestly hand and sacred drops, or a God-ordained baptism in the pool, can in any way redeem you from sin, or land you in heaven: for by this way salvation is impossible. But if I drive the lover of self-righteousness out of this haunt, he runs to another. You will find others who suppose that at least *their feelings*, which are only their works in another shape, may help to save them. There are thousands who think, "If I could weep so much, and groan so deeply, and experience so much humiliation, and a certain quantity of repentance, and so much of the terrors of the law, and of the thunders of conscience, then I might come before God." Souls, souls, this is work-mongering

in its most damnable shape, for it has deluded far more than that bolder sort of work-trusting, which says, "I will rely upon what I do." If you rely upon what you feel, you shall as certainly perish as if you trust to what you do. Repentance is a blessed grace, and to be convinced of sin by God the Holy Ghost is a holy privilege, but to think that these in any way win salvation, is to run clean counter to all the teachings of the Word, for salvation is of the free grace of God alone. There are some, moreover, who believe that if their feelings cannot do it, still *their knowledge can.* They have a very sound creed; they have struck out this doctrine and that; they believe in justification by faith, and their sound creed is to them a confidence. They think that because they hold the theory of justification by faith, therefore they shall be saved. And oh! how they plume their feathers; how they set up their peacock tail because they happen to be orthodox! With what awful pride do they exult over their fellow professors because they hold *the truth*, and all the rest of the Church they think is deluded with a lie. Now this is nothing but salvation by works, only they are works performed by the head instead of by the hand, and oh! sirs, I will tell you—if you rest in creeds, if you hope to be saved because you can put your hand to the thirty-nine articles of an Episcopalian prayer-book, or to the solemn league and covenant of the Presbyterian, or to the confession of faith of the Calvinist—if you fancy that because you happen to receive truth in the head you shall be saved, you know not the truth, but still do lie, because you cling to Satan's falsehood—that salvation is of man and not of God. I know that self-righteousness was born in our bone and that it will come out in our flesh, and even that man in whom its reigning power is kept down will still feel it sometimes rising up. When he has preached a sermon and has got on pretty well, the devil will come up the pulpit stairs and say "Well done.' When he has prayed in public and has had unusual fluency, he will have to be careful lest there should be a whisper behind—"What a good and gifted man you are." Ay, and even in his hallowed moments, when he is on the top of the mountain with his Lord, he will have to watch even there, lest self-congratulation should suggest—"Oh, man, greatly-beloved, there must surely be something in thee, or else God would not have done thus unto thee." Brethren, when you are thinking of your sanctification, if you are tempted to look away from Christ—away with it; and if when you are repenting of sin you cannot still have one eye on Christ, recollect it will be a repentance that will need to be repented of, for there is nothing in ourselves that can be offered to God. There is a stench and putridity in everything that is done of the creature, and we can never come before God save through Christ Jesus, who is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. I have thus tried to denounce the plan which God has rejected.

II. I shall now, in the second head, SHOW THAT BOASTING IS EXCLUDED, for in a blessed sense God has accepted the second plan, namely, the way of salvation by faith through grace.

The first man that entered heaven, entered heaven by faith. "By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." Over the tombs of all the goodly who were accepted of God, you may read

the epitaph—"These all died in faith." By faith they received the promise; and among all yonder bright and shining throng, there is not one who does not confess, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The plan, then, which God has chosen, is one of grace alone. I will try and picture that plan before our mind's eye. We will imagine Boasting to be exceedingly desirous to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He marches to the door and knocks. The porter looks out and demands, "Who stands there?" "I am Boasting," saith he, "and I claim to have the highest seat; I claim that I should cry aloud and say, Glory be unto man, for though he has fallen, he has lifted himself up, and wrought out his own redemption." And the angel said, "But hast thou not heard that the salvation of souls is not of man, nor by man, but that God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion? Get thee gone, Boasting, for the highest seat can never be thine, when God in direct opposition to human merit, has rejected the Pharisee, and chosen the publican and the harlot, that they may enter into the kingdom of heaven." So Boasting said, "Let me take my place, then, if not in the highest seat, yet somewhere amid the glittering throng; for instance, let me take my place in the seat of *election;* let it be said and taught, that albeit God did choose his people, yet it was because of their works which he foresaw, and their faith which he foreknew, and that, therefore, foreseeing and foreknowing, he did choose them because of an excellence which his prescient eye discovered in them; let me take my seat here." But the porter said, "Nay, but thou canst not take thy place there, for election is according to the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. This election is not of works, but of grace, and the reason for God's choice of man is in himself, and not in man; and as for those virtues which thou sayest God did foreknow, God is the author of all of them if they exist, and that which is an effect cannot be a first cause; God foreordained these men to faith and to good works, and their faith and good works could not have been the cause of their foreordination." Then straight from heaven's gate the trumpet sounded—("For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger," Then Boasting found that as works had no place in election, so there was no room for him to take his seat there, and he bethought himself where next he could be. So after a while Boasting said to the porter, "If I cannot mount the chair of election, I will be content to sit in the place of conversion, for surely it is man that repents and believes." The porter did not deny the truth of that, and then this evil spirit said, "If one man believes and not another, surely that must be the act of the man's will, and his will being free and unbiassed, it must be very much to that man's credit that he believes and repents and is therefore saved, for others, having like opportunities with himself, and having the same grace no doubt, reject the proffered mercy and perish, while this man accepts it, and therefore let me at least take my seat there." But the angel said in anger, "Take thy

seat there! Why, that were to take the highest place of all, for this is the hinge and turning-point, and if thou leavest that with man then thou givest him the brightest jewel in the crown. Does the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Is it not God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure? Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, and it is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth. Oh, Boaster, thy free-will is a lie; it is not man that chooses God, but God that chooses man; for what said Christ, "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you;" and what said he to the ungodly multitude, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" in which he gave the death-blow to all ideas of free-will, when he declared that man *will not* come to him that he might have life; and when he said again in another place, as if that were not enough, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." So Boasting, though he were fain not to admit it, was shut out, and could not take his place in heaven upon the stool of conversion; and while he stood there but little abashed, for bashfulness he knows not, he heard a song floating over the battlements of heaven from all the multitude who were there, in accents like these, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be all the praise."

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That gently forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

"But then," said Boasting, "if I may not have so high a place, let me at least sit on the lowly stool of perseverance, and let it at least be said that while God saved the man and is therefore to have the glory, still the man was faithful to grace received; he did not turn back unto perdition, but watched and was very careful, and kept himself in the love of God, and therefore there is considerable credit due to him; for while many drew back and perished, and he might have done the same, he struggled against sin, and thus by his using his grace he kept himself safely; let me sit, then, on the chair of perseverance." But the angel replied, "Nay, nay, what hast thou to do with it? I know it is written, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God,' but the same apostle forbids all fleshly trust in human effort by that blessed doxology,—'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.' That which is a command in one Scripture is a covenant promise in another, where it is written, 'I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.'" Oh! brethren, well do you and I know that our standing does not depend upon ourselves. If that Arminian doctrine, that our perseverance rests somewhere in our own hands, were true, then damnation must be the lot of us all. I cannot keep myself a minute, much less year after year.

"If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ should fall away;
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day."

But what saith the Scripture?—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand; my Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." And what says the apostle—"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." I have not time to quote all the innumerable passages, but it is absolutely certain that if there be one doctrine in Scripture more clearly revealed than another, it is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the man who doubts that precious truth, has quite as much reason to doubt the Trinity, to doubt the divinity of Christ, or the fact of the atonement; for nothing can be more clear in the plain, common-sense meaning of the words than this, that they who are in Christ have, even to-day, eternal life and shall never perish. Now since this perseverance is not dependant upon our works, but like all the rest of salvation is an efflux from the bottomless love of God, boasting is manifestly excluded. But once again, and lastly, Boasting sometimes asks to be admitted a little into glorification. I fear sometimes that a doctrine which is popular in the Church, about degrees of glory, is not altogether unassociated with that old self-righteousness of ours which is very loath to die. "One star differeth from another star in glory" is a great truth—but this the stars may do without differing in degrees. One star may shine with one radiance, and another with another; indeed, astronomers tell us that there are many varieties of colour among stars of the same magnitude. One man may differ from another, without supposing a difference in rank, honour, or degree. For my part, I do not see anything about degrees in glory in Scripture, and I do not believe in the doctrine; at least if there be degrees, mark this, they cannot be according to works, but must be of grace alone. I cannot consider that because one Christian has been more devoted to Christ than another, therefore there will be an eternal difference, for this is to introduce works; this is to bring in again the old Hagar marriage, and to bring back the child of the bond-woman, whereof God has said, "The son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Oh! brethren, I think we can serve God from some other motive than that base one of trying to be greater than our brethren in heaven. If I should get to heaven at all, I do not care who is greater than I am, for if any one shall have more happiness in heaven than I shall, then I shall have more happiness too; for the sympathy between one soul and another will there be so intense and so great, that all the heavens of the righteous will be my heaven, and therefore, what you have I shall have, because we shall all be one in fellowship far more perfectly than on earth. The private member will there be swallowed up in the common body. Surely, brethren, if any of you can have brighter places in heaven, and more happiness and more joy than I, I will be glad to know it. The prospect does not excite any envy in my soul now, or if it did *now*, it certainly would not *then*, for I should feel that the more *you* had the more *I* should have. Perfect communion in

all good things is not compatible with the private enrichment of one above another. It is all joint-stock in heaven. Even on earth the saints had all things common when they were in a heavenly state, and I am persuaded they will have all things common in glory. I do not believe in gentlemen in heaven, and the poor Christians behind the door; I do believe that our union with each other will be so great, that distinctions will be utterly lost, and that we shall all have such a joint communion, and interest, and fellowship, that there will be no such thing as private possession, private ranks, and private honours—for we shall there, to the fullest extent, be one in Christ. I do believe that Boasting is shut out there, but I think that if there were these degrees in glory, I mean if they are dependant on works done on earth, Boasting would at least get his tail in; if it did not insinuate its whole body, it would at least get some of its unhallowed members over the wall, whereas, the text says it is excluded. Let me enlarge this one word, and then proceed. It does not say, "Boasting, you are to be allowed to come in and sit down on the floor." No, shut the door and do not let him in at all. "But let me in," says he, "and I will be quiet." No, shut him out altogether. "But at least let me put my foot in." No, exclude him; shut him out altogether. "But at least let me sometimes go in and out." No, shut him out altogether; exclude him; bolt the door; put double padlocks on it. Say once for all, "Boasting, get thee gone; thou art hurled down and broken in pieces, and if thou canst refit thyself, and come once more to the gate to ask admittance, thou shalt be driven away with shame." It is *excluded;* it cannot be let in, in any sense, in any term, nor in any degree. As Calvin says, "Not a particle of boasting can be admitted, because not a particle of work is admitted into the covenant of grace;" it is of grace from top to bottom, from Alpha to Omega; it is not of man nor by man, not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy, and therefore, boasting is excluded by the law of faith.

III. And now, thirdly, and very briefly. Beloved in Christ Jesus, what a precious truth I have now to hold up to the eyes of poor lost sinners, who to-day are aware that they have no merits of their own. Soul, THE VERY GATE WHICH SHUTS OUT BOASTING, SHUTS IN HOPE AND JOY FOR YOU.

Let me state this truth broadly, that the ignorant may catch it. You say to-day, "Sir, I never attend the house of God, and up to this time I have been a thief and a drunkard." Well, you stand to-day on the same level as the most moral sinner, and the most honest unbeliever, in the matter of salvation. They are lost, since they believe not, and so are you. If the most honest be saved, it will not be by their honesty, but by the free grace of God; and if the most roguish would be saved, it must be by the same plan. There is one gate to heaven for the most chaste and the most debauched. When we come to God, the best of us can bring nothing, and the worst of us can bring no less. I know when I state it thus, some will say, "Then what is the good of morality?" I will tell you. Two men are overboard there; one man has a dirty face, and the other a clean one. There is a rope thrown over from the

stern of the vessel, and only that rope will save the sinking men, whether their faces be fair or foul. Is not this the truth? Do I therefore underrate cleanliness. Certainly not; but it will not save a drowning man; nor will morality save a dying man. The clean man may sink with all his cleanliness, and the dirty man may be drawn up with all his filth, if the rope do but get its hold of him. Or take this case. Here we have two persons, each with a deadly cancer. One of them is rich and clothed in purple, the other is poor and wrapped about with a few rags; and I say to them—"You are both on a par now, here comes the physician himself—Jesus, the king of disease; his touch can heal you both; there is no difference between you whatever." Do I therefore say that the one man's robes are not better than the other's rags? Of course they are better in some respects, but they have nothing to do with the matter of curing disease. So morality is a neat cover for foul venom, but it does not alter the fact that the heart is vile and the man himself under condemnation. Suppose I were an army-surgeon, and there had been a battle. There is one man there—he is a captain and a brave man; he led his rank into the thick of the battle, and he is bleeding out his life from a terrible gash. By his side there lies a man of the rank and file, and a great coward too, wounded in the same way. I come up to both of them, and I say, "You are both in the same condition; you have both the same sort of wound, and I can heal you both." But if either of you should say, "Get you gone; I'll have nothing to do with you," your wound will be your death. If the captain should say, "I do not want you; I am a captain, go and see to that poor dog yonder." Would his courage and rank save his life? No, they are good things, but not saving things. So is it with good works, men can be damned with them as well as without them if they make them their trust. Oh! what a gospel is this to preach in our theatres; to tell those hedge-birds, those who are full of all manner of loathsomeness, that there is the same way of salvation open to them as to a peer of the realm, or a bishop on the bench; that there is no difference between us in the way of mercy, that we are all condemned; that there may be degrees as to our guilt, but that the fact of our condemnation is quite as certain to the best as to the worst! "Oh" you say, "this is a levelling doctrine!" Ah! bless God if you are levelled. "Oh," you say, "but this cuts at everything that is good in man!" Ah! thank God, if it kills everything in which man glories, for that which man thinks to be good is often an abomination in the sight of God. And oh! if all of us together, moral or immoral, chaste or debauched, honest or unholy, can come with the rope about our neck, and with the weeds of penitence upon our loins, and say, "Great God, forgive us; we are all guilty; give us grace; we do not deserve it; bestow upon us thy favour, we have no right to it, but give it to us because Jesus died." Oh! he will never cast out one that way, for that is the way of salvation. And if we can put our hand this morning—no matter though it was black last night with lust, or red up to the elbow with murder—yet if we can put our hand on Jesu's head, and believe on him—the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Where is boasting now? You who have done so much for humanity—you cannot boast,

for you have nothing to boast of. You fine gentlemen and noble ladies, what say you to this. O be wise, and join in the prayer, "But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!" And may the Lord then pronounce over us his sentence, "Ye are clean, go and sin no more; your iniquities are all forgiven you."

IV. I close by just observing, that THE SAME PLAN WHICH SHUTS OUT BOASTING LEADS US TO A GRACIOUS GRATITUDE TO CHRIST.

We are sometimes asked by people, "Do you think that such a thing is necessary to salvation?" or, perhaps, the question is put in another way, "How long do you think a man must be Godly in order to be saved?" I reply, dear friend, you cannot understand us, for we hold that these things do not save in any sense, "Why, then," they say, "are you baptized?" or, "Why do you walk in holiness?" Well, not to save myself, but because I am saved. When I know that every sin of mine is forgiven, that I cannot be lost, that Christ has sworn to bring me to the place where he is; then I say, Lord what is there that I can do for thee? Tell me. Can I burn for thee? Blessed were the stake if I might kiss it. If thou hast done so much for me, what can I do for thee? Is there an ordinance that involves self-denial? Is there a duty which will compel me to self-sacrifice? So much the better.

> "Now for the love I bear his name,
> What was my gain I count my loss;
> My former pride I call my shame,
> And nail my glory to his cross."

This is the way to do good works; and good works are impossible until we come here Anything that you do by which to save yourself is a selfish act, and therefore cannot be good. Only that which is done for God's glory is good in a Scriptural sense. A man must be saved before he can do a good work; but when saved, having nothing to get and nothing to lose; standing now in Christ, blessed and accepted—he begins to serve God out of pure gratitude and love. Then, virtue is possible, and he may climb to its highest steeps, and stand safely there without fear of the boasting which would cast him down, though he will feel even then that his standing is not in what he has done, nor in what he is, nor in what he hopes to be, but in what Christ did, and in the "It is finished," which made his eternal salvation secure.

O for grace, that we may live to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to Him be glory for ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TWO ADVENTS OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 22ND, 1861, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."—Hebrew ix. 27, 28.

WE must begin by noticing the parallel which the apostle here draws. The words "as" and "so" suggest a comparison between two truths the correspondence of which he designed to set forth; the one a fact generally allowed, the other a fact he was anxious to inculcate. Now you will note that he says "It is appointed unto men *once* to die," and only once. This is a truism. The rule is universal; the exceptions are inconsiderable. One or two persons may have died twice; as, for instance, Lazarus and those others who were raised from the dead by by Christ. These, we cannot doubt, after living for a little while, returned again to the tomb. But for the most part, speaking of the race, "It is appointed unto men once to die." The greatest affairs of life can only be performed once. We are once born naturally; we are once born spiritually; there are not two natural births, neither are there two spiritual births. We live on earth but once; we die but once; we shall be judged but once; we shall receive the final sentence but once, and then we shall once be received into the joy of our Lord for ever, or once be driven from his presence never to return. Now, a part of the apostle's parallel lies here. As men die but once, so Christ hath died but once. As the law required but one death, so Jesus Christ, having offered that one death as the ransom for his people, achieved his task. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt

surely die;"—was the penalty: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"—was the payment. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." That is *fact* the first. "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This is *fact* the second. But you have not got the full weight of the comparison yet. After man's spirit has been once on earth, has lived its time, and the body has died, the soul is to re-visit this earth again, for "after this the judgment." Every man will have two advents—the advent which he now enjoys or which he now misuses upon earth; and the advent which lies beyond the present course of probation. After he has descended to the tomb he shall come here again; his bones shall come together, bone to his bone; the flesh shall come upon the skeleton and the spirit shall return, either from the heaven where it rejoices, or from the hell where it howls, to inhabit the body once again and to stand upon the earth. We must all come here again. What though the place that now knows us shall know us no more for ever? Yet, somewhere upon this earth we shall stand. What though we should be unable to recognise any likeness between that and the place in which we lived, and unable to recognise any likeness between us and what we were? Yet, hither we must return to receive our appointed doom. Now, so is it with Christ. He has once died, and he is to come a second time. A second time is his body to be on earth. After death, the judgment! only when we speak of Christ, he shall come, not to be judged but to be the Judge. After death comes the reward with us; after death the reward with him. After our death comes our resurrection; that has passed already upon Christ. As a resurrection shall come to saint and sinner, the final audit and pronunciation of the sentence; so Christ shall come to the final gathering together of his elect and the final overthrow of all his enemies, to the final crowning of his head, when he shall have put all things under his feet, and reign for ever and ever.

Having thus I think brought out the parallel of the text, I will leave it for you to think over. As it is appointed unto men to die once, and after this the judgment, so it was appointed unto Christ to die but once. That is achieved. The sequel is now pointed out. To them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. We will spend our time to-night, and God grant that we may spend it profitably, by observing, first, *the likeness between the two*

is looked for and anticipated from the hour that the purpose is promulgated among the people. But thy coming, Jesu, thy glorious advent—where are they that strain their eyes to catch the first beams of the sun rising? There are a few of thy followers who wait for thine appearing. We meet with a few men who walk as those who know that time is short, and that the Master may come at cock-crowing, or at midnight, or at the day-watch. We know a few beloved disciples who with longing hearts beguile the weary hours, while they prepare songs to greet thee, O Immanuel!

"Strangers on earth, we wait for thee;
O leave the Father's throne,
Come with a shout of victory, Lord,
And claim us as thine own.

No resting place we seek on earth,
No loveliness we see,
Our eye is on the royal throne,
Prepared for us and thee."

Lord, increase the number of those who look for thee, and desire, and pray, and wait, and watch through the dreary hours of the night for the morning which thy coming shall usher in!

Yet, mark, when he shall come, there will be this to say about it, that *he will come to bless those who do wait for him just as he did at the first.* Blessed were the eyes that saw him; blessed were the hearts that loved him; blessed were the ears that heard him; blessed were the lips that kissed him; blessed were the hands that broke the tributary alabaster-box upon his glorious head. And blessed shall they be who are counted worthy of the resurrection and of the kingdom which he hath prepared. Blessed are they who, having been born of the Spirit can see the kingdom of God; but doubly blessed are they who, having been born of water as well as of the Spirit, shall enter into the kingdom of God. For unto all this is not given. There be some who see not yet the kingdom, and others who cannot enter because they will not obey the ordinance which makes them Christ's disciples. Thrice blessed shall they be who, with loins girt about, being obedient servants and having done his will, shall hear him say, "Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." He comes to bless his people.

But then there is this further likeness, and with the mention of it, I close this first point: he comes, not only to bless his people, but *to be a*

stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that believe not upon him. When he came the first time he was like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. As the refiner's fire burns up the dross, so did he consume the Pharisees and Sadducees; and as the fuller's soap cleanses away the filth, so did he unto that generation when he condemned it, even as Jonah the prophet did unto the men of Nineveh and thereby condemned the men of Jerusalem because they repented not. Thus too, when he shall come the second time, while he shall bless his people, his fan will be in his hand and he will throughly purge his floor, and they who know him not and love him not, shall be driven away like the chaff into fire unquenchable. Long not for Christ's coming if thou lovest him not, for the day of the Lord will be unto thee darkness and not light. Ask not for the world's end; say not, "Come quickly, for his coming will be thy destruction; his advent will be the coming of thine eternal horror. God grant us to love the Saviour and put our trust in him; then, but not till then, we may say, "Come quickly, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

II. Now we shall turn to the second part of our subject, THE UNLIKENESS BETWEEN THE TWO ADVENTS.

In the prophecy of *his coming* the first and the second time there was disparity as well as correspondence. 'Tis true in both cases he will come attended by angels, and the song shall be, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." It is true in both cases, shepherds who keep watch over their flocks even by night shall be among the first to hail him with their sleepless eyes—blessed shepherds who watch Christ's folds and therefore shall see the Great Shepherd when he cometh. Still, how different I say will be his coming. At first he came an infant of a span long; now he shall come—

"In rainbow-wreath and clouds of storm,"

the glorious one. Then he entered into a manger, now he shall ascend his throne. Then he sat upon a woman's knees, and did hang upon a woman's breast, now earth shall be at his feet and the whole universe shall hang upon his everlasting shoulders. Then he appeared the infant, now the infinite. Then he was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, now he comes to glory as the lightning from one end of heaven to the other. A stable received him then; now the high arches of earth and heaven shall be too little for him. Horned oxen were then

his companions, but now the chariots of God which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, shall be at his right hand. Then in poverty his parents were too glad to receive the offerings of gold and frankincense and myrrh; but now in splendour, King of kings, and Lord of lords, all nations shall bow before him, and kings and princes shall pay homage at his feet. Still he shall need nothing at their hands, for he will be able to say, "If I were hungry I would not tell ye, for the cattle are mine upon a thousand hills." "Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field." "The earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof."

Nor will there merely be a difference in his coming; there will be a most distinct and apparent difference *in his person*. He will be the same, so that we shall be able to recognise him as the Man of Nazareth, but O how changed! Where now the carpenter's smock? Royalty hath now assumed its purple. Where now the toil-worn feet that needed to be washed after their long journeys of mercy? They are sandaled with light, they "are like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace." Where now the cry, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head?" Heaven is his throne; earth is his foot-stool. Methinks in the night visions, I behold the day dawning. And to the Son of Man there is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." Ah! who would think to recognise in the weary man and full of woes, the King eternal, immortal, invisible Who would think that the humble man, despised and rejected, was the seed-corn out of which there should grow that full corn in the ear, Christ all-glorious, before whom the angels veil their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" He is the same, but yet how changed! Ye that despised him, will ye despise him now? Imagine the judgment-day has come, and let this vast audience represent the gathering of the last dreadful morning. Now ye who despised his cross, come forward and insult his throne! Now ye who said he was a mere man, come near and resist him, while he proves himself to be your Creator! Now, ye who said, "We will not have this *man* to reign over us," say it now if you dare; repeat now if you dare your bold presumptuous defiance! What! are ye silent? Do you turn your backs and flee? Verily, verily, so was it said of you of old. They that hate him shall flee before him. His enemies shall lick the

dust. They shall cry to the rocks to cover them, and to the hills to hide them from his face. How changed, I say, will he be in the appearance of his person.

But the difference will be more apparent *in the treatment which he will then receive.* Alas, my Lord, thy reception on earth the first time was not such as would tempt thee here again. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they thrust out the lip; they say, He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him if he delighteth in him; I am become a reproach; the song of the drunkard, a by-word and a proverb." "When we shall see him, there is no beauty in him that we shoud desire him." This was the world's opinion of God's Anointed. So they did salute Jehovah's Christ when he came the first time. Blind world, open thine eyes while the thunder-claps of judgment make thee start up in terror and amazement, and look about thee. This is the man in whom thou couldst see no beauty—darest thou say the same of him now? His eyes are like flames of fire, and out of his mouth goeth a two-edged sword; his head and his hair are white like wool, as white as snow, and his feet like much fine gold. How glorious now! How different now the world's opinion of him! Bad men weep and wail because of him. Good men cry, "All hail! all hail! all hail!" and clap their hands, and bow their heads, and leap for joy. Around him an innumerable company of angels wait; cherubim and seraphim with glowing wheels attend at his feet, and ever unto him they continually, continually, continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." Let us suppose again that the judgment-day has come, and let us challenge the world to treat the Saviour as it did before. Now, then, crowds, come and drag him down, to hurl him from the hill headlong! Step forward, ye Pharisees, and tempt him, and try to entangle him in his words. Herodians, have ye no penny now, that ye may ask him a difficult question to entrap him? What, Sadducees, have ye no riddles left? Aha! aha! laugh at the Scribes and at the wise men; see how the wise Man of Nazareth hath confounded them all. See how the sufferer hath put to nought the persecutors! Come Judas, arch-traitor, sell him for thirty pieces of silver! Come and give him another kiss and play the traitor o'er again! Pilate, come forward and wash thy hands in innocency and say, "I am clear of the blood of this just person!" See ye to it ye fathers of the Sanhedrim, wake from your long slumbers and say again, if ye dare,

"This man blasphemeth." Smite him on the cheek ye soldiers; buffet him again ye prætorians. Set him once more in the chair and spit into his face. Weave your thorn-crown and put it on his head, and put the reed into his right hand. What! have ye ne'er an old cloak to cast about his shoulders again? What, have ye no songs, no ribald jests, and is there not a man among you that dareth now to pluck his hair? No, see them how they flee! Their loins are loosed; the shields of the mighty have been cast to the winds. Their courage has failed them; the brave Romans have turned cowards, and the haughty bulls of Bashan have hastened away from their pastures. And now ye Jews cry, "Away with him," now let his blood be on you and on your children. Now come forward ye ribald crew, and mock him as ye did upon the cross. Point to his wounds; jeer at his nakedness; mock ye his thirst; revile his prayer; stand ye and thrust out your tongues, and insult his agonies if ye dare. Ye did it once! 'Tis the same person; do it over again. But, no; they throw themselves upon their faces and there goeth up from the assembled mass a wail such as earth never heard before, not even in the day when Mizraim's children felt the angel's sword, and, weeping worse than ever than was known in Bochim, hotter tears than Rachel shed when she would not be comforted for her children. Weep on, 'tis too late for your sorrow now. Oh! if there had been the tear of penitence before, there had not been the weeping of remorse now. Oh! if there had been the glancing of the eye of faith, there had not been the blasting and the scorching of your eyes with horrors that shall utterly consume you. Christ comes, I say, to be treated very differently from the treatment he received before.

The difference appears once more in this; *he will come again for a very different purpose.* He came the first time with, "I delight to do thy will O God." He comes a second time to claim the reward and to divide the spoil with the strong. He came the first time with a sin-offering; that offering having been once made, there is no more sacrifice for sin. He comes the second time to administer righteousness. He was righteous at his first coming, but it was the righteousness of allegiance. He shall be righteous at his second coming with the righteousness of supremacy. He came to endure the penalty, he comes to procure the reward. He came to serve, he comes to rule. He came to open wide the door of grace, he comes to shut to the door. He comes not to redeem but to judge; not to save but to pronounce the sentence;

not to weep while he invites, but to smile while he rewards; not to tremble in heart while he proclaims grace, but to make others tremble while he proclaims their doom. Oh Jesu! how great the difference between thy first and thy second Advent!

III. I must now spend the few minutes that remain in ASKING A FEW QUESTIONS.

What has this to do with us? It has something to do with every one of us, from the oldest bald-head here down to that rosy child who is listening with eyes of wonder to the thought that Christ shall come, and every eye shall see him. There are many spectacles which only a few among the children of men can see, but every eye shall see *him*. Many of us may be gone from this earth before the next great display shall be seen in London, but every eye shall see him. There may be some grand sights which you feel no interest in; you would not see them if you might, but you shall see him. You would not go to a place of worship to hear him, but you shall see him. perhaps you went up to the House of God sometimes, and when there, vowed you would never go again. Ah! but you will be there then, without a question as to your choice. And you will have to remain till the close too, till he pronounces either the benediction or the malediction upon your heads. For every eye shall see him. There is not one of us that will be absent on the day of Christ's appearing; we have all then an interest in it. Alas! it is a sorrowful thought that many will see him to weep and to wail! Will you be among that number? Nay, do not look round upon your neighbour—will *you* be among that number? Alas for you! You will, if you never weep for sin on earth. If you do not weep for sin on earth you shall weep for it there; and, mark, if you do not fly to Christ and trust in him *now*, you shall be obliged to fly from him and be accursed of him *then*. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha;" accursed with a curse! Paul said that. In the name of the Church, by its most loving and tender apostle, the soul is cursed that loves not Christ. Heaven on that day shall solemnly ratify the curse with an "Amen;" and the day of judgment brings its thunders to roll in dreadful chorus the sound "Amen; let him be accursed if he loves not Christ." But there will be some there who, when Christ shall come, shall greatly rejoice to see him. Will you be among that number? Will there be a crown for you? Will you share in that magnificent triumph? Will you

make one of that royal court which shall delight to "see the King in his beauty" in "the land that is very far off?" Sister, will you be among the daughters of Jerusalem who shall go forth to meet King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals? Brother, will you be among those who shall go forth to meet the King when he cometh with, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord?" "I hope so," saith one. I hope so, too, but are you sure? Well, I hope so." Do not be content with having a hope unless you know it is a good hope through grace. What say you to-night—have you been born again? Have you passed from death to life? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Has the Spirit of God had dealings with you? Have you been led to see the fallacy of all human trust? Have you been led to see that no good works of yours can ever fit you to reign with Christ? Have you been led to discard your righteousness as filthy rags? Soul, can you say to-night—

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Humbly, feebly, but still earnestly, can you say, "Christ is my all; he is all I desire on earth; he is all I need for heaven." If so, long for his appearing, for you shall see him, and shall be glorified in him. But if you cannot say that! We are getting near to the end of the year. This is the last time I shall have the pleasure of addressing you this year. Oh that God may bring in more in the last week of the year than in all the weeks that have gone! It is possible; nothing is too hard for God. It will certainly be so if God shall stir up your hearts, brothers and sisters, to pray for it. Are there not young men here who are not yet the followers of the Lamb? Oh! that to-night, even to-night, the Spirit of God may say in your heart, "Turn ye; turn ye; why will ye die?" and oh! may you be made so uneasy, that to-night you will not be able to give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have put your trust in Christ, and he is yours. To-morrow probably you will hear the guns betokening the time when the ashes of the Prince are put into their resting-place. May every gun be a sermon to you, and as you hear it booming, let this be its message—

"Come to judgment,
Come to judgment; come away."

And may you be able to answer as you hear it, "Yes, blessed be God, I am not afraid to come to judgment, for—

> 'Bold shall I stand in that great day;
> For who aught to my charge shall lay?
> While, through thy blood, absolved I am,
> From sin's tremendous curse and shame.'"

Remember, salvation is by Christ; not of works, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, nor birth; and this is the message which Christ bids us deliver, "Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Oh! may you be led to call on his name by prayer and humble faith, and you shall be saved. "Whosoever believeth on him is not condemned." Oh! may you believe on him to-night if you never have done so before. Touch the hem of his garment, thou with the bloody issue. Say, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," thou with the blind eye; say, "Lord save me, or I perish," thou who art ready to sink; and the ready ears of Jesus, and the ready hands of the Saviour shall now hear and bless if the heart be ready, and if the soul is asking mercy. May God grant you the richest blessings of his grace for Christ Jesu's sake. Amen.

Perhaps it would be improper in the pulpit to wish you "the compliments of the season," but I do wish you the blessing of God at all seasons, in season and out of season, and that is my blessing upon you to-night, that you may have the blessing of God living, and his blessing dying; his blessing in his advent, and his blessing at the judgment. The Lord bless you more and more; may he give you a blessed Christmas and the happiest of new years, and to him shall be all the praise and the honour.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SECRET AND YET NO SECRET.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 26TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."—
Solomon's Song iv. 12 and 15.

OBSERVE the sweet titles with which Christ the husband addresses his Church the bride. "*My sister*," one near to me by ties of nature, my next of kin, born of the same mother, partaker of the same sympathies. *My spouse*, nearest and dearest, united to me by the tenderest bands of love; my sweet companion, part of my own self. *My sister*, by my Incarnation which makes me bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh; *my spouse*, by heavenly betrothal in which I have espoused thee unto myself in righteousness. *My sister*, whom I knew of old and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy; *my spouse*, taken from among the daughters, embraced by arms of love, and affianced unto me for ever. See, my brethren, how true is it that our royal kinsman is not ashamed of us, for he dwells with manifest delight upon this two-fold relationship. Be not, O Beloved, slow to return the hallowed flame of his love. We have the word "my" twice in our version. As if Christ dwelt with rapture on his possession of his Church. "His delights were with the sons of men," because those sons of men were his. He, the Shepherd, sought the sheep, because they were *his* sheep; he lit the candle and swept the house, because it was *his* money that was lost; he has gone about "to seek and to save that which was lost," because that which was lost was *his* long before it was lost to itself or lost to him. The Church is the exclusive portion of her Lord; none else may claim a partnership, or pretend to share her love. Jesus, thy Church delights to have it so! Let every believing soul drink solace out of these wells. Soul! Christ is near to thee in ties of relationship; Christ is dear to thee in bonds of marriage union, and thou art dear to him; behold he grasps both of thy hands with both his own, saying, "*My* sister, *my* spouse." Mark the two sacred holdfasts by which thy Lord gets such a double hold of thee that he neither can nor will ever let thee go. Do thou say in thy heart this morning, "My brother, my husband?" Seek to be near to him in nature,—to be like thy brother, a son of God; and to be near to him in fellowship—to have near and dear intercourse with thy husband, that thou mayest know him and have fellowship with him, being conformable unto his death.

Leaving this porch of cedar, let us enter the palace. Observe the contrast which the two verses present to us. I think that the Spirit of God intends that the verses should be understood, as we intend to use them this morning, but even if we should be mistaken as to the precise interpretation of the passage in its connection, we shall not err in enlisting so beautiful a string of metaphors in the service of the truth. You know, beloved, there are two works of the Holy Spirit within us. The first is when he puts into us the living waters; the next is when he enables us to pour forth streams of the same living waters in our daily life. Our blessed Lord expressed what we mean, when on that great day of the feast he cried, saying, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The Spirit of God first implants in us the new nature. This is his work—to regenerate us, to put into us the new principle, the life of God in Christ. Then next, he gives us power to send forth that life in gracious emanations of holiness of life, of devoutness of communion with God, of likeness to Christ, of conformity to his image. The streams are as much of the Holy Spirit as the fountain itself. He digs the well, and he afterwards with heavenly rain fills the pools. He first of all makes the stream in the desert to flow from the flinty rock, and afterwards out of his infinite supplies he feeds the stream and bids it follow us all our days.

I was pleased to meet a quotation the other day, from one of the early fathers, which just contains in it views I have frequently expressed to you: "The true believer is composed of body, soul, and the Holy Spirit." After the greatest research, eminent mental philosophers have given up all idea of a third principle which they can discover in man, as man. They can find nothing but the body and the soul. But, rest assured that as there is a certain something in the vegetable which we call vegetable life, as there is a sensitive substance which makes animal life, as there is a mysterious subsistence developed as mental life, so there is some real, substantial, divine principle forming spiritual life. The believer hath three principles, the body, the soul, and the indwelling spirit, which is none other than the Holy Spirit of God, which abideth in the faithful continually. Just such a relationship as the soul bears to the body, does the spirit bear to the soul; for as the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the spirit is dead in trespasses and sins; as the body without the soul is dead naturally, so the soul without the spirit is dead spiritually. And, contrary to the general teaching of modern theologians, we do insist upon it that the Spirit of God not only renovates the faculties which were there already, but does actually implant a new principle—that he does not merely set to rights a machinery which had before gone awry, but implants a new life which could not have been there. It is not a waking up of dormant faculties—it is the infusion of a supernatural spirit to which the natural heart is an utter stranger.—Now, we think the first verse, to a great extent, sets forth the secret and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the new man in the soul. Into this secret no eye of man can look. The inner life in the Christian may well be compared to an enclosed garden—to a spring shut up—to a fountain sealed. But the second verse sets forth the manifest effects of grace, for no sooner is that life given than it begins to show

itself. No sooner is the mystery of righteousness in the heart, than, like the mystery of iniquity, it "doth already work." It cannot lie still; it cannot be idle; it must not rest; but, as God is ever active, so this God-like principle is active too; thus you have a picture of the outer life, proceeding from the inner. "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." The first is what the Christian is before God; the next is what the Christian will become before men. The first is the blessedness which he receives in himself; the next is the blessedness which he diffuses to others.

We will begin, then, where God the Holy Ghost begins with us, when he enters the recesses of the heart and breathes the secret life.

I. With regard to the first text; you will clearly perceive that in each of the three metaphors you have very plainly the idea of *secrecy*. There is a garden. A garden is a place where trees have been planted by a skilful hand; where they are nurtured and tended with care, and where fruit is expected by its owner. Such is the Church; such is each renewed soul. But it is a garden *enclosed*, and so enclosed that one cannot see over its walls—so shut out from the world's wilderness, that the passer-by must not enter it—so protected from all intrusion that it is a guarded Paradise—as secret as was that inner place, the holy of holies, within the tabernacle of old. The Church—and mark, when I say the Church, the same is true of each individual Christian—is set forth next as a *spring*. "A spring,"—the mother of sweet draughts of refreshing water, reaching down into some impenetrable caverns, and bubbling up with perennial supplies from the great deeps. Not a mere cistern, which *contains* only, but a fresh spring, which through an inward principle within, begets, continues, overflows. But then, it is a spring *shut up*: just as there were springs in the East, over which an edifice was built, so that none could reach the springs save those who knew the secret entrance. So is the heart of a believer when it is renewed by grace; there is a mysterious life within which no human skill can touch. And then, it is said to be a *fountain;* but it is a fountain *sealed*. The outward stones may be discovered, but the door is sealed, so that no man can get into the hidden springs; they are altogether hidden, and hidden too by a royal will and decree of which the seal is the emblem. I say the idea is very much that of secresy. Now, such is the inner life of the Christian. It is a secret which no other man knoweth, nay, which the very man who is the possessor of it cannot tell to his neighbour. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There are mysteries in nature so profound, that we only label them with some hard name, and leave them, and all the knowledge that we have about them is, that they are beyond the reach of man; but what they are, what are those mysterious impulses which link distant worlds with one another, what the real essence of that power which flashes along the electric wire, what is the very substance of that awful force which rives the oak, or splits the spire, we do not know. These are mysteries; but even if we could enter these caverns of knowledge, if we could penetrate the secret chamber of nature, if we could climb the lofty tree of knowledge till we found the nest where the callow principles of nature as yet unfledged are lying, yet even then we could not find out where that hidden life is. It is a something—as certainly a something as the natural life of man. It is a reality—not a dream, not

a delusion: it is as real (though far more divine) as that "vital spark" which we say is "of heavenly flame." But though real, it is not in itself perceptible by human senses. It is so hidden from the eyes of men who have it not, that they do not believe in its existence. "Oh," say they, "there is no difference between a Christian and another man. There may sometimes be a little difference in his outward acts, but as to his being the possessor of another life the idea is vain." As to the regenerate being men of a distinct race of being, as much above man naturally as man is above the brute beasts, that carnal men would scorn to acknowledge. They cannot make this out. How can they? It is a spring shut up; it is a fountain sealed. Nay, and the Christian himself, though he feels the throbbings of the great life-force within, though he feels the perpetual bubblings up of the ever-living fountain, yet he does not know what it is. It is a mystery to him. He knows it came there once upon a time; perhaps he knows the instrumentality by which it came; but what it was he cannot tell. "One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see; whereas I once loved sin I now hate it; whereas I had no thoughts after God and Christ, now my heart is wholly set upon divine things." This he can say. But how it was he does not know. Only God did it—did it in some mysterious way, by an agency which it is utterly impossible for him to detect. Nay, there are times when the Christian finds this well so shut up that he cannot see it himself, and he is led to doubt about it. "Oh!" saith he, "I question whether the life of God be in me at all." I know some have scouted the idea of a Christian's being alive and, at the same time, doubting his spiritual existence; but however great a paradox it may seem, it is, nevertheless, a mournful truth in our experience. That spring, I say, is sometimes shut up even to ourselves, and that fountain is so fast sealed, that although it is as really there as when we could drink of it, and the garden is as truly there as when we refreshed ourselves among its spicy beds, yet we cannot find any solace therein. There have been times, when if we could have the world for it, we could not discover a spark of love in our hearts towards God—nay, not a grain of faith. Yet he could see our love when our blind eyes could not, and he could honour our faith even when we feared we had none. There have been moments when, if heaven and hell depended on our possession of full assurance, we certainly must have been lost, for not only had we no full assurance, but we had scarce any faith. Children of light do walk in darkness: there are times when they see not their signs, when for three days neither sun nor moon appears. There are periods when their only cry is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There is little wonder about this when we see how secret, how impalpable, how undiscernible by eye, or touch, or human intellect, is the Spirit of God within us. It is little wonder that sometimes flesh and blood should fail to know whether the life of God be in us at all. "A garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

A second thought is written upon the surface of the text. Here you see not only secresy, but *separation*. That also runs through the three figures. It is a garden, but it is a garden enclosed—altogether shut out from the surrounding heaths and commons, enclosed with briars and hedged with thorns, which are impassable by the wild beasts. There is a gate through which the great husbandman himself can come; but there is also a gate which shuts out all those who would only rob

the keeper of the vineyard of his rightful fruit. There is separation in the spring also. It is not the common spring, of which every passer-by may drink; it is one so kept and preserved distinct from men, that no lip may touch, no eye may even see its secret. It is a something which the stranger intermeddleth not with; it is a life which the world cannot give and cannot take away. All through, you see, there is a separateness, a distinctness. If it be ranged with springs, still it is a spring specially shut up; if it be put with fountains, still it is a fountain bearing a particular mark—a king's royal seal, so that all can perceive that this is not a general fountain, but a fountain that has a proprietor, and stands specially by itself alone. So is it with the spiritual life. It is a separate thing. The chosen of God, we know, were separated in the eternal decree. Their names were written in a different book from the rest of men; the Book of Life records their names, and none but theirs. They were separated by God in the day of redemption, when Christ redeemed them from among men, out of every kindred, and nation and tribe. They are separated day by day by divine providence, for the fiery pillar gives light to them, while it is darkness to the Egyptians. But their separation, so far as they can most clearly see it, must be a separation caused by the possession of the life which others have not. I fear there are some professed Christians who have never realised this. They are a garden. One could hardly speak ill of their character, their carriage is excellent, their deportment amiable; their good works commend them before men; but still they are not separate from sinners; in vital essential distinction they have little manifest share. Their speech may be half of Canaan, but the other half is of Ashdod; they may bring unto God thank-offerings, but there is a niche in their house for Baal too. They have not yet heard the cry, "Come ye out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues." Not yet has the mandate of the prophet rung in their ears, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from hence; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." They are a garden, but they are not a garden walled round. Oh, how many we have in this day of this kind. They can come to the church, they can go to the world; they can talk as God's people talk, and they can murmur as the rebellious murmur; they understand well the gift of prayer, but they understand little of the secret of the inner life of devotion. Brethren, if you and I have ever received that third, that noble, that divine principle, the life of God, into our souls, it will be utterly impossible for us to feel at home with the men of the world. No, we shall say, "without the camp" must be my place, bearing his reproach. Sometimes, indeed, we shall not feel at home with the professing Church, we shall be constrained to come even out of her, if we would follow the Lord fully. Ay, and there are sacred seasons when we shall be so enclosed that we shall not be at ease in any society, however select, for our souls will pine for sweet solitude, secret communion, hidden embraces; we shall be compelled to walk alone with Christ. The garden will be shut up even from other gardens, distinct even from other places where Christ walks. Oh, there will be periods with your soul, if it be renewed, when you must be alone, when the face of man will disturb you, and when only the face of Jesus can be company to you. I would not give a farthing for that man's spiritual life who can live altogether with others; if you do not sometimes feel that you must be a garden enclosed, that you must enter into your closet, and shut-to the door; if you do not feel seasons when the society of your dearest friend

is an impediment, and when the face of your sweetest relation would but be a cloud between you and Christ, I cannot understand you. Be ye, O ye children of Christ, as chaste virgins kept alone for Christ. Gad thou not abroad, O my heart, but stay at home with Jesus, thy lover, thy Lord, thy all. Shut up thy gates, O my heart, to all company but his. O my sweet well-spring of delights, be shut up to every lip but his, and O thou fountain of the issues of my heart, be thou sealed, only for him, that he may come and drink, and drink again, and take sweet solace in thee, thy soul being his, and his alone.

In the third place, it is worthy of a more distinct remark that you have in the text the idea of *sacredness*. The garden enclosed is walled up that it may be sacred to its owner; the spring shut up is preserved for the use of some special person; and the fountain sealed more eminently still bears the mark of being sacred to some distinguished personage. Travellers have said that they have discovered gardens of Solomon which were of old enclosed where the king privately walked, and they have also found wells of most deliciously cold water, which has been dexterously covered, so that no person unacquainted with the stone in the wall, which might revolve, or might be removed, could have found the entrance to the spring. At the foot of some lofty range of mountains, a reservoir received the cooling streams which flow from melted snows, this reservoir was carefully guarded, and shut out from all common entrance, in order that the king alone might enter there, and might refresh himself during the scorching heats. Now such is the Christian's heart. It is a spring kept for Christ. Oh, I would that it were always so. Oh, how often do we pollute the Lord's altar! How frequently, my soul, dost thou let in intruders; alas! how common it is for us to be feasting other friends and shutting the door against *him*. How often do we keep him waiting in the street, while we are entertaining some barbarian who is passing by, who offers us his kiss, but is meanwhile stabbing us with his right hand. Christian men and women, I appeal to your experience now. Have you not to mourn frequently, that you are not so much for Christ as you could wish to be? Though you recognise the truth of the text, "Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price," do you feel its force as you ought to do, in the actions which you perform for Christ? Are they all wholly for him? Could you take for your motto, "All for Jesus?" Could you feel that, whether you buy or sell, whether you read or pray, whether you go out in the world or come back to your home, that Jesus only is the one object on whom your heart is set, and for whom your life is spent? Blessed are they, those virgin souls, who whithersoever the Lamb doth lead, from his footsteps ne'er depart! Thrice happy are they who wear the white robe unsoiled by contact with the world! Thrice blessed are they who can say, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips, for his love is better than wine!" Every Christian should feel that he is God's man—that he has God's stamp on him—and he should be able to say with Paul, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

But I think there is another idea prominent, and it is that of *security*—security to the inner life. "A garden enclosed." "The wild boar out of the wood shall not break in there, neither shall the little foxes spoil the vines. "A fountain shut up." The bulls of Bashan shall not mud her streams with their furious feet; neither shall the wild beast

of Lebanon come there to drink. "A fountain sealed." No putrid streams shall foul *her* springs; her water shall be kept clear and living; her fountains shall never be filled up with stones. Oh, how sure and safe is the inner life of the believer. Satan does not know where it is, for "our life is hid with Christ." The world cannot touch it; it seeks to overthrow it with troubles, and trials, and persecutions, but we are covered with the Eternal wings, and are safe from fear of evil. How can earthly trials reach the spirit? As well might a man try to strike a soul with a stone, as to destroy a spirit with afflictions. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him; he hath placed us in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High; in his pavilion hath he hidden us, and in a high rock hath he secured us. As a castle preserves the beseiged, and as the ramparts keep those who find refuge behind them, even so munitions of stupendous rock thy dwelling-place shall be. "Who is he that shall harm you," when God is your protector? "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment shalt thou condemn." No temptation shall be able to destroy the purity of the life within; no crushing weights of doubts shall be able to take away the vital principle from that new source of strength. If all the powers of earth and hell could combine, and in their uttermost fury assault the spirit in its weakest hour, that immortal principle must still exist,—it would boldly defy them all, and triumph over every one of them; for he who gave it pledged his life for its preservation. The Spirit in the Christian is a spark of the Godhead, and till the Godhead dies the Christian's inner life can never expire. We are immortal, even though we be mortal. Within this outward crust that perisheth there is a soul which endures, and within that soul which endures there is a something which might outlast even the soul itself—a part of the being of God, the indwelling Holy One of Israel, who is himself most surely divine. "God dwelleth in us, and we in him." We are one with Christ, even as Christ is one with the Father; therefore as imperishable through Christ's life as Christ himself. Truly may we rejoice in the fact that "because he lives we shall live also."

Once more only. I think in looking at the text you receive the thought of unity. You notice, it is but one garden—"a garden enclosed." "*A* garden." It is but *one* spring, and that is shut up; it is but *one* fountain. So the inner life of the Christian is but one. There is the old life which still survives—that old death rather, the body of sin and death, struggling against the law of life which God has put into his members, but this has no kinship with the life divine. It is alone, and knows no relationship with earth. There is but one life for all Christians; either we have it, or we are dead. There are degrees of operation, but it is the same God. There are differences of administration, but it is the same Spirit that quickeneth. We may not all of us have "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." I wish we had. I would that the two baptisms would cease, and that once again the Church would recognise and practise the baptism of believers. But we *do* have one Spirit, otherwise we are not Christians. I may dissent myself as much as I please from another man who is in Christ—I cannot do that, however, without sin; but dissociate myself as I may I must be one with him, for the life that is in him is in me. The same life which quickens me, if I be in Christ,

dwells also in him. When I hear strict communion talked of, it reminds me of a little finger which was washed very clean, and therefore thought the rest of the body too filthy to have fellowship with it, so it took a piece of red tape and bound it tightly round itself, that the life-blood might not flow from itself into the rest of the body. What think you, brethren? Why, as long as that little finger was itself alive, the pulsations and the motions of the blood went from it to all the rest of the body, and that little piece of red tape there was but a ridiculous sham; it did not affect anything; it had no influence; it only enabled the little finger boastfully to glory, and perhaps to earn for itself the sad distinction—"These be they that separate themselves;" but the blood flowed on unimpeded, and the nerves and sinews felt the common life-throb still. They forgot, when they denied fellowship in the outward act of eating bread and drinking wine, that the essential spirit of communion was far too spiritual to be thus restrained, it had overleaped their boundary and was gone. The only way in which a Christian can leave off communing with all other Christians is by leaving off being a Christian. Thus can the finger leave off communing with the rest of the body—by rotting away, and no how else, as long as it is alive. Communion is the life-blood of the soul. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit that quickens the body of the Church, and that Holy Ghost will go into every member, and you may try to check him by Church decrees, or to stop him by your trust-deeds and your ordinances, that such-and-such a Church shall never be loosed from the bands of ancestral bigotry, but the Church's life will beat freely through all the members of the Church's fellowship, and communion *will* go to all who are in Christ. There is but one garden, but one spring, but one sealed fountain; and if you have it in your heart, and I have it in mine, there is a relationship between you and me that is as near as if you and I had the same soul, for you and I have the same Spirit. If you could imagine two bodies quickened by the very same mind, what a close connection would that be! But here are hundreds of bodies, hundreds of souls, quickened by the selfsame Spirit. Brethren, indeed not only ought we to love one another, but the love of Christ constraineth us, so that we cannot resist the impulse; we do love each other in Christ Jesus.

II. I shall now need your attention, while with brevity I try to open the second text, which presents a decided contrast, because it deals not so much with the inner life as with the active life which goes abroad into all the deeds of the Christian in the world, and is the natural outgoing of the life within.

First, notice that in contradistinction to our first thought of secresy you have in the text *manifestation*. "A fountain of gardens." Everybody can see a fountain which runs streaming through many gardens, making deserts fertile. "A well of living waters." Whatever the traveller does not see, when he is riding along on a thirsty day, he is sure to see the fountain; if there be one any where he is certain to observe that. "And streams from Lebanon." So that any passer-by in the valley, looking up the side of the mountain, will see by the clusters of trees which skirt the stream where the stream is; or, if it be a smaller brook, just as sometimes in Cumberland and Westmoreland, on a rainy day you see the mountain suddenly marked with streaks of silver all adown its brown sides, where the brooks are rippling, so the

Christian becomes like the streams leaping adown Lebanon's steep sides, clearly perceived even from a distance, manifest to the most casual observer. Now, brethren, this is what you and I ought to be. No man ought to covet publicity for his virtue, or notoriety for his zeal; but, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a city in a valley—he is to be "a city set upon a hill;" he is not to be a candle put under a bushel, but a candle in a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in the eyes of some, and the hiding of oneself is doubtless a blessed thing, but the hiding of *Christ in* us can never be justified, and the keeping back of truth which is precious to ourselves, is a sin against our kind, and an offence against God. Those of you who are of a nervous temperament and of retired habits of life must take care that you do not too much indulge your natural propensity, lest you should be useless to the Church. Seek in the name of him who was not ashamed of you to do some little violence to your feelings, and tell to others what Christ has told to you. Keep not the secret—it is too precious—it too much concerns the vital interests of man. Speak! if thou canst not with trumpet tongue, yet speak with still small voice. If the pulpit must not be thy tribune, if the press may not carry on its wings thy words, yet say, as Peter and John did, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee." And speak, too, as thou canst—gently to ones, if not loudly to twenties; quietly to twos, if not publicly to scores. By Nathanael's well talk to the Samaritan woman, if thou canst not on the mountain preach the sermon; in the house, if not in the temple; in the field, if not upon the exchange; in the midst of thine own household, if thou canst not in the midst of the great family of man. At any rate, hide not thy talent; wrap it not up. "It is but one," thou sayest. So much the more reason why thou shouldst make the greater use of that one. Conceal it not; bring it out; trade with it, and so thou shalt multiply the talent, and thou shalt bring in good interest to thy Lord and Master. The inner life is secret—mind that you have this inner mystery; but out of the secret emanates the manifest; the darkness becomes the mother of light; from the dark mines comes the shining coal. Oh! see to it, that from all that is hidden, and secret and mysterious, there comes out the plain and the manifest, that men may see the holiness, truthfulness, and zeal of God in thy life.

But clearly enough, again, we have in the second text, in opposition to the separation of the first, *diffusiveness*. The garden was enclosed before; now it is "a fountain of gardens;" the well was shut up, now it is a well of living waters; before we had the fountain sealed, now we have streams dashing adown the sides of Lebanon. So a Christian is to be separate in his inner life; but in the outer manifestations of that inner life, he is to mingle for good among his fellow-men. It was usual in Romish countries, for women who wished to be specially holy, to make recluses of themselves; and in the Church of St. Roche, in Paris, there was a small building erected on the side of the Church. The only opening was a little grating, through which the necessaries of life were passed. Within this narrow cell, there lived for eighty years, and died, I think, at the age of ninety-six, a woman doubtless devout, certainly superstitious. There she passed her life. The only sound she heard was the tramp of the worshippers upon the Church pavement,

and the chant of the daily service; but she lived there, thinking she was serving God by being separate from men. That is not the separation of the New Testament. We are to be separate from sinners, as Christ was, and who ever went among them more than he did? We are to be healthy, and by that health separate from the leper; we are to be clean, and by that cleanness separate from the filthy. But we are to go among them; we are to visit; we are to distribute ourselves what Christ has given to us. If we keep ourselves altogether apart, we shall be useless to our fellow-men; we shall be like stagnant pools, we shall grow putrid by degrees. We must let the streams flow abroad; we must seek to give to others what Christ has given to us. Now, some of you who keep yourselves separate in that sense, may I beg you to see if there be no mission of mercy for you? Go ye out among them as physicians in the midst of the sick, as torchbearers in the midst of darkness. Go ye out as loosers of the bonds among the captives; as openers of prison doors among those that be bound; and he who has given you the true principle within, which is and must be shut up, will bless the outgoings of your zeal, both in the morning and in the evening, and cause that, watering others, your own soul shall be watered too.

Briefly we are obliged to speak on each of these points; but notice, thirdly, that in opposition to the sacredness of the first text we have in the second verse an unlimited *freeness*, especially in that last expression—"streams from Lebanon." What can be freer than the brook, which leaps along the mountain side? There the bird wets its wings; there the red deer comes to drink; and even that wild beast of Lebanon, of which we read in the Book of the Kings, comes there, and without let or hindrance slakes its thirst. What can be freer than the rivulet singing with liquid notes adown the glen? It belongs to no one; it is free to all. Whosoever passeth by, be he peer or peasant, may stoop there and refresh himself from the mountain stream. So be it with you, Christian. Carry about with you a piety which you do not wish to keep for yourself. A light loses none of its own lustre when others are lit at its flame. Remember, you shall earn riches by giving riches, and in this sense giving away shall be an increase of your wealth. I know some who are in an ill sense, like fountains shut up. They love the doctrine of election, but there is one doctrine they love better, and that is, the doctrine of exclusion. They love to think they are shut in, but they feel quite as much delight that others are shut out. Their conversation is always flavoured with the thought of shutting others out. They are told that in such-and-such a Church there has been a large increase. Well, they hope they are genuine; by which they mean that they do not believe they are. A young believer begins to tell them something of his joys. Well, they don't like to be too fast in pronouncing an opinion; by which they mean, they would not like one more to get in than should, and they are half afraid that perhaps some may overstep the bounds of election and get saved who should not be. Well, brethren, I love the doctrine of election, I love to think that the garden is enclosed, but I do love in my own life to exemplify the equally precious truth of the freeness of the gospel, so that if I speak to any it shall not be to discourage them, but to encourage them—not to say, "Get you gone!" but "Come and welcome!" "Depart, ye cursed," is nothing to do with me; my business is to say, "Come, ye blessed." I would rather go to the door, and say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" than slam

it in a sinner's face with "What hast thou to do here?" Nay, we must be shut up in the inner life; but let every wall be broken down as to the outer life. We must be hidden springs within, but let us be sweetly flowing rivulets without, giving drink to every passer by.

And not to detain you long, you will notice that, while we had in the other text the idea of security, in connection with that we have here in this text the idea of *approach*. The garden was shut up—that was to keep it. There are no walls here, so that all may come to it. The streams were shut up before; here it is an open well. The fountain was sealed in the first verse; here it is a flowing stream, which is to teach us this,—that the way God keeps his people in security is not by shutting out their enemies from attacking them, but while laying them open to temptation and attack, he yet sustains them. It is not much to preserve oneself behind a wall which cannot be scaled, but to stand where arrows are flying thick as hail, where lances are being pushed with fury, where the sword-cuts are falling on every part, to stand, I say, invulnerable, invincible, immortal; this is to wear a divine life which cannot be conquered by human power. Such is the Christian. We *are* to pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" but indeed, we often are tempted, notwithstanding our prayer. God will put us where we must be tempted—put us where we must be tried, because, if we be not tried, there is no honour to him; and if we be not tempted, then where is the glory to the grace that delivers us out of temptations? The Lord does not put his plants into a hot-house, as some gardeners do; no, he sets them out in the open air, and if the frost is coming, he says, "Ah! but no frost can kill them, and they will be all the sturdier in the summer for the cold in the winter." He does not shelter them either from the heat of the sun, or from the cold by night, for in this world we must have tribulation, and we must have much of it too, for it is through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom. But what God does to his people is this. He keeps them *in* tribulation, preserves them in temptation, and brings them joyfully out of all their trials. So, Christian, you may rejoice in your security; but you must not think that you are not to be attacked; you are a stream from Lebanon, to be dashed down many a cascade, to be broken over many a rough rock, to be stopped up with many a huge stone, to be impeded by many a fallen tree; but you are to dash forward with the irresistible force of God, sweeping everything away, till you find at last the place where shall be your perfect rest.

And last of all, in opposition to the unity of which I spake, we have in our second text great *diversity*. You have "a fountain," not of a garden, but "of gardens;" you have a well, but it is a well of living waters; you have not a stream, but streams—streams from Lebanon. So a Christian is to do good in all sorts of ways, and his fruits are to be of many kinds; he is to be like the trees of Paradise, which bear twelve manner of fruits. The Christian is to have all sorts of graces. "Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good repute;" he is to have all these. It is an old proverb that a man may have too many irons in the fire; but it depends upon what fire it is; for if it is God's fire, put all the irons in it. A man may attempt too much they say,—but not for Christ. If you should attempt great things, and have great faith, you shall succeed in all that you attempt. There seems to be a fear among some Christian men

either of doing too much themselves, or else of letting other people do too much; and I know some to whom that text might *almost* be applied, "They have the key of the kingdom of heaven, but they neither enter themselves, and they that would they hinder." Not content to refuse the burden for themselves, they will not even touch it with one of their little fingers; but they are afraid that others shall carry the burden either. Well, we are not afraid as these are. Blessed be God, if there is a trench to be filled up, let us struggle which shall lead the way; if there is a rampart to be climbed, if there is no other man to throw the irons over with the scaling-ladder, let your minister attempt the deed, and lead the van, for he is well assured that there are many here who would jostle with him, and say, "Let me come first; let me serve my Master; let me live or let me die, if I may but glorify him." What! bring forth for Christ a little shrivelled cluster upon the topmost bough —a cluster which the very birds of heaven will not deign to touch, because it is too little even for their appetites? No, rather let us have every bough weighed down with clusters, like those of Eshcol, which will take two ordinary men to carry, but which we can bear in rich profusion, because the life of the Spirit of God is in us. We are a race of little doers, of little givers, of little thinkers, of little believers. O God, raise us up again giants in these days; give us again the consecrated men who shall stand upon the sword like the old Roman, and say, "For God I devote myself; to Christ I give body, soul, and spirit, and if I be offered up upon the sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Oh! if the fountain, the secret fountain, were better seen to, I think there would be more of these outward streams; and if the sealed well were better guarded, we should see more of these rapid streams from Lebanon, which would make glad the people of God, and the world at large.

And now, how many of you have the secret spring within you? If your soul is not renewed by grace you cannot do good. "Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." No man enters fully into discipleship with Christ, till the water as well as the Spirit has been reverently received: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit ye cannot *enter* the kingdom of heaven." But those two things being done, being born of water and of the Spirit, go ye forth to show to others the mystery, the *fellowship* of the mystery—to make all men know that God has appeared unto us in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their iniquities. Preach of Christ when ye know Christ, but not till then. Let the streams flow out when you have the inner fountain, but not till then. Sad reflection! There are some of you that have it not. Oh! if you have it not, you perish. You cannot get it of yourselves. He alone can give it. You are in his hands to give it to you. Oh! may your longings end in groanings to-day, and may you groan to God, "Lord! renew me, Lord, cause me to be born again!" And those groanings will be proofs that he has begun the good work, and those longings shall be evidence that there is a well in you, though it is a well shut up,—a well shut up even from yourself. God grant that you may seek and find through Jesus Christ; and to him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

A VOICE FROM THE HARTLEY COLLIERY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 30TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—Job xiv. 14.

ONCE more the Lord has spoken. Once again the voice of Providence has proclaimed "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass." O sword of the Lord, when wilt thou rest and be quiet? Wherefore these repeated warnings? Why doth the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, yet death shall not come nigh unto us. We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far hence. If we be sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another twenty years of life; and the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why he should not do the same. If man cannot kill death, he tries at least to bury him alive; and since death will intrude himself in man's pathway, we endeavour to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in providence is continually filling our path with tombs. With kings and princes there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come; God has, therefore, spoken to *them*. They were but few in number; one death might be sufficient in their case. That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also are wishful to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud: God has spoken to *them* also. There were many; one death would not be sufficient; it was absolutely necessary that there should be many victims, or we should have disregarded the warning. Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit's mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we should

have said, "Ah, it is a common occurrence; there are frequently such accidents as these?" The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has at least had this effect, that men are talking of death in all our streets. Oh! Father of thy people, send forth thy Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement higher ends may be answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end. Oh! may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted, and may spiritual life be given as the result of temporal death to the many who now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon churchyard.

This text is appropriate to the occasion, but God alone knoweth how applicable the discourse may be to some here present; yes, to young hearts little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death; to aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order, but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text, and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. "If a man die, shall he live again?" NO!—YES!

I. We answer the question first with a "No." He shall not live again here; he shall not again mingle with his fellows, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him with regard to himself, and equally true with regard to his neighbours. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. "If a man die, shall he live again." *Shall he live for himself?* No; if he hath lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, thou mayest empty the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but thou shalt never have another season to spend in intoxication! Thou who hast broken through all the bounds of morality, thou mayest live in this life debauched, depraved, and devilish, but death shall put an end to thy career of lust. Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time thou shalt ever drink it. If there be any pleasures in sin, thou shalt never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once for all, and at the bottom thou shalt find the bitter dregs which shall be gall for ever. Once thou shalt insult high heaven, but not twice. Once shalt thou have space to blaspheme; once shalt thou have time proudly to array thyself in self-righteousness; once shalt thou have power to despise the Christ who is the Saviour of men, *but not twice.* The longsuffering of God shall wait for thee through thy life of provocations; but thou shalt not be born again into this world; thou shalt not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. Thou shalt not live again to forget the God who hath daily loaded thee with mercies. Thou hast thy daily bread now; the clothes that are on thy back shelter thee from the cold; thou goest to thy house, and thou hast comforts and mercies

there, but like the swine which feed beneath the oak, forgetful of the green bough which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the grass, but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so thou livest in this world, forgetful of the God who made thee, in whom thou livest, and movest, and hast thy being. In this life thou art unthankful but thou shalt have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All thy candles shall go out in eternal darkness. There shall be no more dainty meals for thee; no more joyous holidays, no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from thee. That which makes life desirable shall be removed if thou diest impenitent, till thou shalt hate thine existence and count it thy highest blessing if thou couldst cease to be. Thou shalt not live again, I say, to treat thy God worse than the ox treateth its owner. The ass knoweth his master's crib, but thou knowest not, though thou shalt know, for this is the last season in which thou shalt play the brute. My dear hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God, you have his Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached in your ears. I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this house of prayer, that you hear one who, when he fails for want of power, fails not for want of will to do you good; one who has not shunned to warn you, and to preach in all simplicity the whole counsel of God, so far as he has been taught it by the Holy Spirit. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God. You shall have no more Sabbaths to mis-spend when this life is over. There shall be no church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. No warning hand shall point you to the cross; no loving lip shall cry, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Ye have your last warnings *now* sinners; if ye reject them ye shall have no more. Ye hear in this life your last invitations; despise them, and the door shall be shut in your face for ever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look to him now and live; refuse him, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, and no other life in which you may lay hold of him.

"Fix'd is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, 'tis then too late;
Justice has closed mercy's door,
And God's longsuffering is no more.

Here you may have a mother to weep for you; a wife to pray for you; friends who will counsel you; the blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a house of prayer, but it is your last time. Now or never; now or never. Lost in time; lost in eternity; saved now, saved for ever. Sinner, it is thy last turn. Will thou choose to be damned? Then damned thou art without hope! May God save thee now, and saved thou art beyond fear of

perishing. But it is thy last, thine only opportunity. Where the tree falleth there it must lie for ever.

"Return, O wanderer to thy home,
'Tis madness to delay;
There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day.
Return! Return!"

Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears, it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. "Oh!" you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." When you are in the pit of hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine that if you could come back to earth again you would be another man. Ah! but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. Keep the fountain unchanged, and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain, and the same effects will follow. If the lost spirits could escape from hell, they would sin as they did before; if they could again listen to the gospel they would again reject it, for he that is filthy will be filthy still; the flames of hell shall work no change in character; for they have no sanctifying influence; they punish, but they do not cleanse. Sinners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did you would but increase your condemnation. There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief, and, if it were possible, hell would then be less tolerable for you than it shall be now. Oh! my poor dying hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for *your* death-hour is hastening on, and you have but to-day in which to find a Saviour.

"Sinner beware!—the axe of death,
Is raised and aimed at thee:
Awhile thy Maker spares thy breath,
Beware, O barren tree."

Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, "*Now or never*, NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER."

In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness' sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought: it is not to be repeated. If God hath safely guided the ship across the sea and brought it to its desired haven, it casteth anchor for ever, and goeth not out a second time into the storm. Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation; one life in which to glorify God on earth in blessing our fellow-men; one life in which faith may be

tried and love made perfect; one life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in providence; and one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies, but we shall not return to the scene of conflict.

Brethren is it not a mercy for you and for me if we be in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, brethren, it were unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those brethren, those men of God, who in the pit held prayer meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives; though we look at their weeping widows and their sorrowing children, it were wrong to wish them back again. What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in heaven? Would not the very suggestion of return, though it were to the most faithful spouse and best-beloved children, be a cruelty? What, bring back again to battle the victor who wears the crown! Drag back to the storm and the tempest, the mariner who has gained the strand! What, bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation, and to sin? No. Blessed be thou, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be

"Far from this world of grief and sin,
With God, eternally shut in."

This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from heaven. Here we are strangers and foreigners; here we have no abiding city; but we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not another. There is one season when we must walk by faith and not by sight, and be fed with manna from heaven; but blessed be God there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan—the rest which remaineth for the people of God. What man among ye, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired to-day with the world's noise, and vexed with its temptations; who that has come from a bed of sickness; who that is conscious of sin, would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might galley-slave long to return to his oar, or captive to his dungeon? No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the colliery to glory are not to leave their starry spheres, but rest in Christ for ever.

2. But now we pass to the other thought under this first head. "If a man die, shall he live again?" *Shall he live for others?* No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there (we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single public-house within a mile of the village), but if there were there any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again. If there were any there who led others

astray, by bold speeches against God, they have done once for all their life's-mischiefs. And so with each of us to-night. Do I speak to one here who is living a useless life; a tree planted in rich soil but bearing no fruit; a creature made by God but rendering him no service? Do I not speak to some such to-night? I know I do. You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still it may be said of you, "I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Ye have not done it unto one of the least of these his brethren, and ye have not done it unto Christ. It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to perdition is very simple; it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Well, sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend; the very last season when you shall turn upon your heel and say, "Ha! ha! there is nothing in it!" The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect too.

> "One sickly sheep infests the flock,
> And poisons all the rest."

But there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is to notice men who carry the infection of sin wherever they go about them. In some of our villages, and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dung-hills of corruption. To put them by the side of a youth for an hour would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Men who, as Saul breathed out threatenings, breathe out lasciviousness. Ah! do I speak to such a wretch? It is thy last rebellion—thy last revolt. Thou shalt never do this again. Never again shalt thou lead others down to hell, and drag them to the pit with thee. Remember that. And some there be who not only by example, but by overt teaching drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of "infidel lecturer;" whose business it is to pervert men's minds by hard speeches against the majesty of heaven. Let them labour hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah's throne, for they have little time to do it in. Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do, and if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil. This is their only time; their sure damnation draweth nigh. Hushed shall be their high words; cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall

crush them in his anger, and destroy them in his hot displeasure. If a man die, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. I do not know what your life is my friend. You have stepped in here to-night; it is not often you are in a place of worship, but listen now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror, and always an ill example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours; where you shall not teach your boy to drink; where you shall not instil into your daughter's mind unholy thoughts. The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways. The time shall be over with you working-man yonder, you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous, and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into hell. You will find when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will be utterly impossible for you then to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like them, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well, jeer and joke, and point the finger, and slander, and persecute as you may; it is the last time, and you shall never have another opportunity to mock the saints. O remember, it were better for you that a mill-stone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea than that you should thus offend Christ's little ones. Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What, bring him back again—that old drunkard of the village tap-room, restore him to life? No, no; good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What, bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no; he vexed the righteous long enough; let him abide in his place. What, bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others and lead them astray? What, bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against gospel light? No, no. With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging among others. Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature, but a greater benevolence says, "No, let him be chained, or he will rend others." We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creep among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it,—"It were better that one man should die for the nation, that the whole nation perish not." If a man die then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind.

And now, let me remind you that it is the same with the saint, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No. This is our season to pray for our fellow-men, and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God's ambassadors any more. Oh! when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance. Methinks if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, "O Lord, would that I could preach again, and once more warn poor souls." I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet who ever preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should; and when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, "Would that I could have talked more personally, and spoken more earnestly, to this man!" I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have, for that must be heaven to a man, to feel that God has delivered him out of his ministry, it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering; now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ's service, and for devotion to his cause. If there could be sorrow among the spirits that are crowding around the throne of Christ, methinks it would be this, that they had not laboured more abundantly, and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn to-night, had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow-men just as they were all in the last article of death. They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honour! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is New Testament and Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavoured to pursue, and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college: that a man may preach to his fellow-miners even though he cannot speak grammatically; and hence they do not excite their ministers to labour after literary attainments, but after the souls of men; and the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart, and to make their

fellow-men feel. We should have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver; and if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses. And yet what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None, but that he feels the power of God in his own soul, and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely, but still mightily to others. We want all our Churches to feel that they must not say, "Who is John So-and-so? He is only a cobbler; he must not preach. What is Tom So-and-so? He is only a carpenter; why should he preach?" Ah, these are the men who shook the world; these are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome. With all our gettings, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the things that are: and those base things which God hath chosen to stain the pride of human glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth. I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you want a minister in order to come to Christ. Priestcraft is a thing we hate, and as you hate it too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word, but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so. Your poor brethren in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God, and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So be you. Hasten to work while it is called to-day; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land.

II. "If a man die shall he live again?" Yes, yes, that he shall. He does not die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends. The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were some of them swollen with foul air; some of them could scarcely be recognised, but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shrivelled though it be, neither have those bodies. They are now sown, and they shall spring up either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life. Scattered to the winds of heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies, yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of omniscience, and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of omnipotence. The Lord knoweth every particle of the bodies of them that are his. All men, whether they be righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This much cometh to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state; either for ever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, for ever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in heaven or in hell. Now ye that are unconverted, think of this I pray you for a moment. Ye shall live again; let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say, and however speciously they may put it, mark this word—you shall not rot in the tomb for ever; there shall not be an end of you when they shall say "Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." Ye shall live again. And hark thee, sinner; let me hold thee by the hand a moment; *thy sins shall live again.* They are not dead. Thou hast forgotten them, but God has not. Thou hast covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in his book, and the day shall come when all the sins that thou hast done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day. What sayest thou to this, sinner? The sins of thy youth, thy secret sins—oh! man, let that thought pierce through thee like a point of steel, and cut thee to the very quick—thy sins shall live again. *And thy conscience shall live.* It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken; the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep; depend on that; the terrors of hell shall make thee lift up thine eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then you are still in the land of hope, you will find however that an awakened conscience when there is no Christ to flee to is an awful thing. Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the halter. Ah, careless sinner, you dare not to-night sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future; you know you dare not. But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter, it speaks now, but it will thunder then; it whispers now, and you may shut your ears, but its thunder-claps then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen. Oh! transgressor, thy conscience shall live again, and shall be thy perpetual tormentor. Remember that *your victims shall live again.* Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin, and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad whom you led astray from the path of virtue shall point to you in hell and say, "He was my tempter." That woman—let us cover up that deed,—bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black darkness like the eyes of serpents, and you shall hear the hissing voice, "Thou didst bring me here," and you shall feel another hell in the hell of that other soul. Oh! God, save us, let the sins of our youth be covered. Oh, save us! Let the blood of

[illegible] be sprinkled on our conscience, for, there are none of us that [illegible] meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, thou Rock of Ages. [illegible]iver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. [illegible]nner, remember thy God shall live. Thou thinkest him nothing [illegible]ow; thou shalt see him then. Thy business now stops the way; [illegible]e smoke of time dims thy vision; the rough blasts of death shall [illegible]ow all this away, and thou shalt see clearly revealed to thyself [illegible]e frowning visage of an angry God. A God in arms, sinner, a [illegible]od in arms, and no scabbard for his sword; a God in arms, and no [illegible]elter for thy soul; a God in arms, and even rocks refusing to [illegible]ver thee; a God in arms, and the hollow depths of earth denying [illegible]e a refuge! Fly, soul! while it is yet time: fly, the cleft in the [illegible]k is open now. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou [illegible]lt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be [illegible]ed; he that believeth not shall be damned." Fly, sinner, to the [illegible]n arms of Jesus! Fly! for he casteth out none that come to him.

And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of [illegible]e saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, [illegible]e were of all men the most miserable. If we knew that we [illegible]ust die and not live for ever, our brightest joys would be [illegible]unched; and in proportion to the joy we lost would be the [illegible]orrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, thy [illegible]Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal "damp," [illegible]hall live again, and thou shalt sit with him before the eternal [illegible]throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades, he [illegible]hall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaven [illegible]of thy many children, thou hast lost them all; not lost we hope, [illegible]but gone before. Oh! there shall be joy when every link that was [illegible]napped shall be re-fitted; when again the circle shall be completed, [illegible]and all losses restored.

"Far, far removed from fear and pain,
Dear brethren we shall meet again."

That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all—

"We shall meet to part no more."

[illegible]Death, thou canst not rob us, thou canst not tear away a limb [illegible]from Jesu's body! Thou canst not take away a single stone from [illegible]the spiritual temple. Thou dost but transplant the flower, O death! [illegible]thou dost not kill it. Thou dost but uproot it from the land of [illegible]frost to flourish in the summer's clime; thou dost but take it from [illegible]the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full [illegible]blown. Blessed be God for death, sweet friend of regenerated [illegible]man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these [illegible]our dusty garments till we put them on afresh glowing with angelic [illegible]glory. Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, [illegible]and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brethren, my soul [illegible]anticipates that day; let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and

we fall asleep; perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery; we sleep into heaven, and wake up in Christ's likeness. When we have slept our last on earth, and open our eyes in heaven, oh! what a surprise! No aching arm, no darkness of the mine, no choke-damp, no labour and no sweat, no sin, no stain there! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says,

"We'll sing with rapture and *surprise*,
His loving kindness in the skies?"

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner. From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once for all, ay and above the skies too. Oh! long-expected day begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord.

"Come death and some celestial hand,
To bear our souls away!"

I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you. I have now to ask you kindly to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than four hundred widows and orphans are left bereaved and penniless, for the working-man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow, let us, however, bear our part with others. I have no doubt the wealthier ones among you have already contributed in your different connexions, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way, but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have may like an opportunity of doing so again. Let us do what we can to-night, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives; and as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land, and that so Christ may be glorified.

The Preacher desires to bear testimony to the hearty sympathy which led his audience, on a cold wet evening to assemble in considerable numbers, and which opened their hearts to subscribe £120 for the bereaved. May the Lord bind up the bleeding hearts!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LIFE IN EARNEST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2ND, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He did it with all his heart and prospered."—2 Chronicles, xxxi. 21.

THIS is no unusual occurrence; in fact it seems to be the general rule of the moral universe that those men prosper who do their work with all their hearts, while those are almost certain to fail who go to their labour leaving half their hearts behind them. Look around you in business. Who are the young men who rise in the establishment? Not your men who sleep behind the counter, who are glad to avoid a customer. Employers soon discover those who throw energy into their work, and they like a young man who has "push" in him; he is sure to be promoted, and in time will become a trader on his own account. Who are the merchants that succeed in this busy time of competition? Your lazy sluggards? No; your men who are diligent in business, who do what they do with both their hands, who breast the current with all their strength, scorning to be carried down the stream to the cataract of bankruptcy. Who are your men who rise to eminence? Men do not go to bed and wake up in the morning to find themselves famous, at least not until they have encountered many stern labours; for God does not at this day give harvests to idle men except harvests of thistles, nor is he pleased to send wealth to the man who will not dig in the field to find its hid treasure. It is universally confessed that if a man would prosper, he must be diligent in business; for at this day, beyond every preceding age is it true, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread."

The same thing is true if we leave mercantile pursuits, and survey any other of the walks of life. If a man would make discoveries in science, he does not hit upon them by accident; but, being in the way, science meets with him. If a man would become eminent as a physician, he must walk the hospitals. If he would attain position at the bar, he must give days and nights to the folios of law. There is no hope for a man in these times in anything unless he proceeds to it with all his heart. It is the same in religion as it is in other things. I would not have you treat religion as though it were a business; but I would have you put as much force, and power, and energy, and heartiness, and earnestness into religion as ever you do into business, and, I might add, that it deserves far more. How is it that false religions have spread? What

made Mahommedanism once so mighty in the earth? It was because Mahomet himself when he preached was as sincerely deluded as any of his followers: when he was pelted in the streets he still persevered, and when assassins dogged his footsteps he counted not his life dear unto him that he might proclaim what *he* thought to be a revelation from heaven. As for his followers, they were not sleepy professors; they drew their scimitars from their scabbards and swore that they would not rest till they had brought men by edge of steel to the faith of their prophet, and on they dashed till their religion, like a mighty rising ocean, swept all before it, nor could its rising wave be driven back till it was met by an equal enthusiasm to withstand its progress. Look again on Roman Catholic missions. How was it that Romanists did what we have never done, and what I fear we never shall do till we have changed our men? How was it that Francis Xavier carried his faith into India, preached in Burmah, obtained great influence in China, and even entered into the recesses of Japan, till everywhere you might see a Catholic convent or nunnery, and a cross lifted up, with devotees bowing before it? Because Xavier's spirit was full of fire. He seemed to be a flash of lightning flaming from one end of heaven to the other. Now mark, as it has been with false religions, so must it be with the true. Under God the Holy Spirit our only hope for the increase of the Church and for the conversion of the world lies in the development of energy within us, in the bringing out of earnestness in Christian souls. Oh! it was not scholarship that converted the heathen world at first, for on the slabs in the catacombs we have decisive evidence that the first Christians could scarcely spell their own names. It was not the pomp of learning, the pride of philosophy, or the power of eloquence, which made the early confessors so mighty; it was their singular earnestness. The Church was all on fire. She was like a volcano; she might not be high and lofty as some of the surrounding hills, but they had summits clothed with frost, while she sent forth earnest truths like streams of lava, which burned their way, and covered all the lands. Christians in those days were Christians indeed. They believed what they professed; they knew what they spoke; they testified what they had seen; and they spoke with an unconquerable, untameable energy, which smote even the iron power of Rome and dashed it into shivers. So must it be to-day, and indeed so is it. Look around you; who are the most useful men in the Christian Church to-day? The men who do what they undertake for God with all their hearts. Where is the preacher whom God blesses to the conversion of hundreds in a year? Is he a sleepy, prosaic soul? Does he confine himself within narrow limits? Does he speak sleepy words to a slumbering congregation? We know it is not so, but where God is pleased to give the congregation it is, whatever it may not be, a proof that there has been earnestness in the preacher. Who are the most successful Sabbath-school teachers? The most learned? Every superintendent will tell you it is not so. The most talented? The most wealthy? No; they are the most zealous; the men whose hearts are on fire; those are the men who honour Christ. Who among you to-day is doing the most for your Master's kingdom? I will tell you. Lend me a spiritual thermometer by which I may try the heat of your heart, and I will tell you the amount of your success. If your hearts be cold towards God, I am sure ye are doing nothing though ye may pretend to do it, but

if you can say, "Lord, our soul is all on flame with an agony of desire to do good to the souls of men;" then you are doing good, and God is blessing you as he did Hezekiah, who did it with all his heart and prospered.

Feeling that very many Christians are not Christians with all their hearts, and that perhaps some of you have only given Jesus Christ a dull, cobwebby corner of your hearts, instead of bidding him sit at the head of the table and reign upon the throne; fearing that we are all in danger of getting into a Laodicean lukewarm state I wish to stir you up this morning, and if I may only stir myself up, I shall be thrice happy to go home and think that at least one has gotten some good from the service, for the preacher needs to be kept alive quite as much as the hearers, for there is a danger that even the Lord's servant may lack the live coal upon his lips, and then he will be useless to his hearers.

This morning we shall notice *the effects of whole-heartedness upon the Christian;* I shall then *endeavour to stir you up with many arguments to be earnest in your work of faith and labour of love;* and when I have so done, I shall *address those to whom religion has as yet been a trifling matter;* may God grant that they may be ready to seek the Lord with all their hearts, for then he will surely be found of them.

I. First, then, let us notice THE SPHERE WHICH CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS OCCUPIES IN THE DIVINE LIFE. Mark, I speak now only to those who are really and savingly converted to God, for if we be not first right with God, zeal for God is but a pretence.

One of the first things that thorough earnestness will do for a Christian man, is to make him *think* very earnestly for his Lord and Master. In the diary of Jonathan Edwards, we find the following account of his feelings towards the Lord's work, "I had great longing for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; my secret prayer used to be in great part taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint of anything that had happened in any part of the world, which appeared to me in some respect or other to have favourable aspect on the interest of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it, and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be earnest to read public news letters, mainly for that end, to see if I could not find some news favourable to the interest of religion in the world." Now, when we are full of zeal for God, it is the same with us. Our thoughts are continually set upon things divine; go where we may we regard our place not as a sphere for business, but as a sphere for usefulness. We make that our very first thought. Why, beloved, if we are really in earnest for God, we shall begin to think of Christ's work in the world as soon as ever we wake; and when we rest at night it will be still with the Lord before us, and with his glory written in our hearts. I am afraid some of you think but very little of him, and of his cause in the world. How often when our missionary heralds are issued, nobody cares to read them. The annual report of what God is doing in foreign nations is generally the driest and dullest affair that ever comes in our way—not so much dry in itself, but because we of this generation have not been tutored and schooled to think of the advance of the gospel and the progress of Christ's cause. Let once this flaming torch of zeal kindle your souls, and you will have Christ's cause upon your hearts at all times.

But when a man has thus had his soul quickened to consider the

cause of Christ, the next thing he will do is to *plan* and to *purpose* for it. What fine purposes some men have at eccentric seasons! After they have listened to some earnest address they go home thinking.—"Well, I must do something;" and they half resolve they will, but, lacking the whole-heartedness of Hezekiah, the purpose never comes to a definite shape; it still resides in the clouds. As some men build castles in the air, so others build churches there, they educate preachers in the air, they support Christ's ministers in the sky, they send out fresh missionaries in the clouds. All their plans are very beautiful, and all practical schemes are poor affairs compared with their magnificent projects, but then it is all an unsubstantial dream—a pleasing picture, a dissolving view, and it soon melts into something which for them is more practical —the world and the affairs thereof. Give a man earnestness, and every time he makes a purpose it *is* a purpose; every stroke of the great motive-power within his soul tells, and sets a wheel in motion; he cannot let the blood circulate through him without its carrying life in every drop; but some men have dead blood in their veins, it is going round, going to the heart and issuing from it, but there is no life in a drop of it. They can talk, and they can sometimes make a resolve, but it never comes to a definite purpose; they never set their teeth and plant their feet down, and say, "God helping me, I will do something. God being with me, I will not live in this world for nothing. I will not be as an oyster which lies in the mud, and opens its shell according as the tide brings round the meal-time; it shall not be said that I live merely to eat and drink, and to accumulate wealth; but, O Christ Jesus! by everything that is true, if thou wilt help me I will serve thee while I live, and, if it must be, will be prepared to die for thy cause." Only earnest men get so far as to select their purpose and adhere to it. Dear friends, choose your gun, but mind you stand to it till every round of ammunition is exhausted.

But we have known persons in a great spasm—in a sort of apoplectic fit of pious enthusiasm, make a huge resolve, but they came to their cooler senses long before it was carried out. The blood has run to the head very powerfully, there has even been too much blood; they have rolled over in the spasm of fanaticism; it has never come to a practical effect. Now, when a man's heart is right with God, what he has resolved to do he will do. I can speak for one, when I say I know a man who, when he feels that God has given him a work to do—when he has once resolved it shall be done, would move heaven and earth but what he would accomplish it; and he would sooner break his heart or destroy his health than he would fail in it; for he feels that if it be God's work, it must be done. Man's work may stop, but God's work cannot; and when any get in his way, or seem to thwart his purpose, that man feels his zeal so boiling over, that for God's sake he forgets everything else; and even dear friendships snap when it appears as if Christ's cause were imperiled. I know this, that when a man gets thoroughly alive for God, he cannot put up with those lazy sluggards who will neither work themselves nor permit others to labour. When once a believer gets his spirit wholly up to the work, it is now—for God and Christ, follow who may; but as for ye that are faint-hearted, go to your homes lest ye make also the man-of-God's heart to faint; stand ye away, lest the chilling

influence of your icy souls should do something to abate our fervour. Methinks a Christian is never worth much till, having been brought up to the point of resolve, he will achieve the heaven-born purpose, come what may, and is ready everything earthly and worldly to crash and smash, but what he will accomplish his life-work in the name of the eternal God who called him to it.

This earnestness of purpose will show itself in *perseverance*. The man fell the first time: "Never mind," saith he, "It is God's work; we will try again." He breaks down again: but he falls to rise. There he sees the mountain-summit glittering in the sunlight; and though he has a burden on his back, he vows, "I will climb there." He has fallen down that crag, and he lies there black with bruises, groaning, and moaning. The first thing he does when he wipes his eyes of the dust, is to look up, and say, "I will mount there yet." He climbs anon—but an antagonist shoves him down. He has not time to stop and examine who it is and resent the insult, but he recommences the ascent. Now and then he runs; when he cannot run he walks; and when he cannot walk he creeps; and when it seems impossible to go on hands and knees, he is content to pull himself up by his hands alone, ofttimes even grasping a briar and sending a thorn into his flesh, but still saying, "It is God's place, and he has bid me climb, and in his divine strength I will do it. I cannot rest, I cannot be quiet till the deed be done." Perseverance is the sure effect of this whole-heartedness for God.

Mark carefully, that this heart being thus on fire will show its zeal in an entire dependance upon God, and in intensely fervent prayer for God's help and for God's blessing. Surely a man cannot know himself, who, when he has a high and noble purpose attempts it apart from God, for he is well persuaded that if it be God's work it must be done in God's strength, and as he must have that strength, he goes before God as if he meant to have it and could take no denial. One of the old Puritans says, "When we pray to God without fervency we do as it were ask him to deny us, but when we can go with fervency, then we must prevail." Oh! those prayers which one has sometimes heard when the man of God seemed like a Samson to get hold of the two pillars of heaven bowing himself with all his strength to pull down the mercy and to destroy his sins, knocks at heaven's gate as for dear life, the knock of a starving beggar who cannot afford to be unheard. Oh! that is prevailing prayer, when we can get a grip of the angel and wrestle with him. I saw in one of the churches in Paris a picture by an eminent artist representing Jacob wrestling with the angel. I had not exactly conceived it so literally as the artist had, for he has sketched the patriarch with his foot between the angel's feet, trying to throw him down, and wrestling just as wrestlers might do in the ring. There ought to be a practical purpose about our prayer, and as intense an earnestness to win the blessing from the angel as there is on the part of the wrestler to hurl his foe upon his back. We shall never get true and lasting revival in the Church till we have men who in the supplications do their work with all their hearts, and thus prosper.

My dear friends, I shall not enlarge further to show you the proper sphere of earnestness,—the fact is that it enters into every part of the

spiritual man: earnestness quickens his pulse, increases the circulation of his blood, it makes the man in all respects in an healthy state; these holy stimulants make the soul stronger than the giant when he is refreshed with new wine. If you would ask me what fire has to do with the Christian sacrifice, I would answer it has everything to do with it. You may present a sacrifice in the dark, but you cannot consume a sacrifice without flame, you may do with very little light, but you must have fire to burn the whole victim, or else the sacrifice is no offering at all. Oh for more of this fire! Jesus! Master! baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire! Fill our souls with fervour; restore unto us the indomitable energy of our ancestors; give us back the northern iron and steel, to which their resolute natures may be likened; deliver us from these willow days in which men bend before every blast: make us strong men to run the race of righteousness, and mighty men made mighty through thy Spirit, with earnestness to serve thee among the sons of men!

II. I shall want your earnest attention while I labour TO STIR YOU UP BY CERTAIN ARGUMENTS WHICH MAY PROVOKE YOU TO THIS EARNESTNESS.

Either our religion is the grossest imposture that was ever palmed upon mankind, or else it is one which deserves the whole life and force and strength of every man who has been blessed by it. I would to-day, if I were not sure that God's Word is true, and that the precious doctrines of grace are the very revelation of heaven, renounce them boldly. Oh! I could not, I hope—I speak before God—hold the religion of Christ, and yet be sleepy about it. It does seem to me that if religion is worth anything, it is worth everything; and that for man to keep his godliness as some great farmers do their little off-hand farms, which they merely farm for pleasure, while their very life and substance is spent in another place, seems to me to be the height of wickedness, and the topmost ridge of absurdity. Either I would never seek God and his righteousness at all, or I would seek them *first*. It seems to me to be an insane attack upon everything like wisdom, to put the worst things first, and the best things last—to put the world on our heads, and heaven under our feet—to make Christ second best, and to make Mammon chief and lord in our affections. Surely this will never do.

But, Christian men, that I may have your hearts warmed this morning; may the Spirit of God take these things and lay them like hot coals to your souls. Remember, my beloved brethren, what solemn things you and I have to deal with. We have to deal with the souls of men, immortal, infinitely precious; we have to deal under God with the eternal interests of heaven and hell; we have dealings with the sinner's sin, and long to see it washed away with the precious blood of Christ; we have dealings with man's natural death in sin, and long that men may be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Now, if the soul be what Scripture tells us it is—if there be heaven and hell—if Christ has made an atonement for sin, these are things that cannot be trifled with. As well dance upon the altar of God, or dabble a harlots' garments in the blood of the Paschal Lamb, as trifle and be half-hearted when we have to deal with such awful things as these.

Consider *the greatness of the work we have to deal with.* Have any of

you a glimpse of an idea of this one city of London? Three millions! Three millions! as many as the Scottish nation, with some sixty thousand added to the number every year: more added than we add accommodation in places of worship to receive them, so that if our churches grow, still not in the same ratio as the population. It is said that we have more than half a million of inhabitants in this city heathens—as positively heathens as though they lived under the sway of the king of Dahomey, or dwelt in the very centre of Tartary—without God and without Christ, never listening to the gospel, never entering a place of worship from the beginning of the year to the end of it. This is the work for which we must gird up our loins. Oh, dear brethren! we cannot afford to be half-hearted here. If there be some happy city somewhere in the world, where all men hear the Word, and where the most are converted, even there coldness were inexcusable; but here, here in this awful city with so much to do, asleep!! Oh! God forgive us that we are not more awake! Think how few there are to do the work. There are, perhaps, many so-called labourers, men who wear the robes of priesthood, but who know not Christ in the power of his gospel. How few there are of the faithful among men who are ready to spend and be spent! When I look at the great harvest—enlarge your thoughts for a moment, the field is the world—when I see corn field after corn field, a thousand millions of immortal souls; and in some countries one missionary to two millions, and in others, not one even to ten millions of immortal souls; one may wipe the sweat from his brow in the hot and sultry day, but only the cold-hearted will stop to rest, for there is so much to do. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." And shall those labourers sleep? O Lord, we beseech thee have pity upon us, and help us never to sleep again, but to be in earnest for poor souls.

Bethink you, I pray you, how earnest Satan is. If *we* slumber, *he* never does; if we are idle, certainly he never is. As Hugh Latimer said, the devil is the most busy prelate in the land; he traverses his diocese; he is always visiting his flock; he is instant in season and out of season to destroy. See the activity of the infidel and the Romanist, of those who hold false doctrines, how zealously do they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. What are we doing? I say brethren, what are we doing? Call it nothing, and you have not called it by too small a name; they are alive, and we are half dead; they are boiling in fervent heat, and we are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm.

And, oh! I pray you, my hearers, think, and let this move you; think of the responsibilities which lie upon us as a Church. I speak not egotistically, to glorify either myself personally or myself in you. But there has never been a congregation—certainly never a dissenting congregation—which has been more favoured than we have been. What has God wrought! What a dew from heaven has rested upon the Word! What multitudes have been added to the Church! What manner of people ought we to be! Indeed, brethren, I do not need to censure, for your obligations are felt, and the Holy Spirit is helping you to fulfil them. There are men in the midst of this Church of whom I dare speak in any and in every company, and say that apostolic days scarcely produced men superior to them. I have the felicity and the honour to see some in this Church who are patterns of everything that is good,

and who not only spend their time for Christ, but who beyond what I ever expected to see of mortal men, give labour, substance, and talent to Christ and his cause. Those I always look upon with joy as being the honourable product of truth fully, fairly, and faithfully preached. But there are many others of whom this could not be said. Oh, we were speaking lies in hypocrisy if we said of all of you that you were doing what you could do, or half what you can do, ay, and in some cases a hundredth part of what you will wish you had done when you come to lie upon your beds. God has been pleased to give a congregation, and to give to that congregation a ministry upon which the Spirit has rested, as is manifested in the many, the very many conversions which daily take place in our midst. The Christian world has looked upon us and said, "How God has favoured that Church!" And if *we* sleep, what base ungrateful wretches shall we be? If God has brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this, and we prove unworthy, deliverance will come from some other quarter to this land, but we shall have to write Ichabod upon these walls, for the glory will depart; God will leave us to our own devices. We have had opportunities of doing good that have been seldom offered to any body of Christians, and if we do not avail ourselves of them, the most withering curse that ever came upon a Christian community must most certainly fall upon us. Oh! may God help us to be found faithful to our charge.

Do you need aught else to stir you up? Behold before you to-day the stream of death washing away myriads of souls: behold, I say, before you this morning the dying souls of men. Hark! their moans are going up to heaven now, the groans which they utter in their last agonies are accusing you before the Most High. "None cared for my soul," is the cry of many. "Great God, I lived in a Christian land but none cared for my soul. I lived in a court or in an alley, and Christian people passed the entrance of that alley to go to chapel but they never thought about me; I lived next door to a Christian man but he never prayed for me; I lived in a top room of the very house where there lived a man of God but he never thought of *me!*" Oh! hear those last cries, I say, as the spirit for the last time reflects upon the cold Church which cared not for her children. Hear the accusation of the angel as he cries, "The sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them." Hear, I beseech you, and let it startle you into earnestness—hear the shrieks of the damned spirits for a moment. Another soul has gone to hell, and while we speak, another, and another, and another. Listen to the solemn fall, the moving of the black waters as they close around the sinking spirit. As roll the masses of water down Niagara's steep, so roll the waves of souls into perdition; and ye, ye are the men whom God has sent to be the saviours of the world; will ye waste the moments and neglect your charge? Black night has settled upon the nations, and ye, ye only are the men who carry the flaming torch into the thick darkness—followers of Christ, disciples of Jesus; ye are to be the deliverers of those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death bound in affliction and iron, and will you sit still, will you fold your arms, will you

give to the world and self that which belongs to Christ? Let my tears conjure you. But what are these if shrieks of doomed souls cannot awake us. What hearts of adamant we must have not to feel while the terrors of hell are around us! What granite bowels must we have received if we believe that men are being lost and yet never care for them! Oh! sits there a Christian man anywhere around me, above, or beneath, who is careless for man's soul? I pray God to send into his ears one piercing shriek from Tophet, and let that abide in his memory, and ring in his soul until he says, "I *must* do something to win sinners to Christ."

But once more, and if I fail here I break down altogether. I conjure myself and you to serve God with all our hearts, because of that love which we have received of Jesus. See, there he hangs: my eye beholds him. His head is crowned with thorns; his feet are pierced with nails; his hands are dropping with blood. Jesus! Master! thou art dying for me; that precious heart's blood of thine is flowing for my redemption and for my cleansing. At thy feet I fall and kiss thee. O thou lover of my soul, I cannot but love thee, thou hast won my heart. The love of Christ constraineth me! And dost thou, Lord, for sinners bleed, for rebels, for enemies, for those who would not have thee to reign over them, and shall I not adore thee? Yes, but when I rise from my knees, shall I go forth into the world and forget thee? Thorn-crowned head, shall I forget thee? Pierced hands and feet, shall I forget ye? Mangled body, shall I forget thee? Slaughtered Emmanuel, shall I forget thee? God forbid.

> "Sooner than not my Saviour love,
> Oh! may I cease to be."

Beloved, what say you, will you look into his face and never weep for souls? Will you look upon his wounds and your heart never be wounded for poor dying men? Will ye live unto yourselves and die unto yourselves? Sirs, the infidel is not far wrong when he tells us that our religion is hypocrisy, if we can be half-hearted over it. Go, go thou enemy of the Church, tell it in Gath; publish it in the streets of Ascalon, till we become a hissing and a reproach if thou shalt find us living, as though truth were a lie, and as though the doctrines revealed of God were but a delusion and an imposture! Wake up, Church of God, wherefore art thou given to slumber? O for a voice like thunder! How would I conjure thee to wake! But what am I, more than half asleep myself? As I read the life of such men as Alleine of Taunton, and Baxter of Kidderminster, Grimshaw of Haworth, and Whitfield of Everywhere, I blush at my cold heart. Especially when perusing the life of our apostle Paul, I blush a thousand times to think how idly I have lived. Sinners, these were men: the tears streamed down their cheeks when they thought of sinners lost for ever; their words froze not like icicles upon their lips, they spake, and every word was power. Oh how they pleaded! How Paul could say, "Night and day with tears," (hear how he puts it,) "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." *He* surely could not accuse himself that he had not poured out his soul for men. No, these men

lived. We dare not say we live. Oh! the long-suffering, and the tender mercy of God, that he has had compassion on such a Church as that of the present day, and that he continues to have mercy upon us, when we are so dull and sluggish in the service of Christ.

Even while I am preaching thus I feel sorry that we should have need of such a sermon. When the Spartans went to battle every Spartan marched with songs, willing to fight; but when the Persians went to the conflict, you could hear as the regiments came on the crack of whips, as the officers drove their soldiers to the fight. You need not wonder that a few Spartans were more than a match for thousands of Persians, that in fact they were like lions in the midst of sheep. So let it be with the Church; never needing to be flogged to action, but full of an irrepressible life which longs for conflict against everything which is contrary to God. Then we should be like lions in the midst of herds of our enemies, and nothing, through God, should be able to stand against us. Play no longer, men! Cease your pipings and dancings in the market places. Come, lift up your hands from those childish toys, come away men, come away from the dormitories where you sleep so luxuriously, and from the playgrounds where you sport so merrily! Get to something that is worth doing, to something that is high, and noble, and heavenly, befitting your birth. "What is this you are calling play?" say you. Why your work, your business, your cares, unless they are sanctified to God. I tell you, sirs, that in the light of eternity all things else save serving God are mere child's-play, mere theatricals, mere masquerading. They are but the mummeries of a carnival, the jests of a comedy, the laughter of a pantomime. It is only serving God that is doing immortal work; it is only living for Christ that is living at all.

III. And now I must draw to a conclusion; may God give me fresh grace while I undertake the solemn work of DEALING WITH CARELESS AND UNCONVERTED SOULS.

When Mr. Whitfield was preaching in the parish church of Haworth, he said when he came to the point of self-examination, "I was about to address the ungodly, but I suppose that after the faithful ministry to which you have listened in this church; there is very little need for me to say anything about this." Mr. Grimshaw thereupon rose and said, "Brother Whitfield, don't flatter them, I fear that half of them are going to hell with their eyes open." And I must say this morning, blessing God for all the conversions that have taken place here, yet for God's sake we dare not flatter you, there are many of you still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, as far from God as ever you were; though we have wept over you and preached to you again and again, yet your hard hearts will not break. Hitherto ye have been proof against all that we can do, and until the Spirit of God shall come upon you, we fear that you will remain the same; but now in God's name let us talk to you.

And so, my hearers, you think that the things of God are not worth serious thought, at least not yet; if they are not altogether trifling things, they are of such secondary importance that any time will do. The scrag end of your life will suffice, you think for them. Now let me remind you who may be sporting with these things, that this is inconsistent with reason and sense. You will find dying to be very earnest

work. It will be no amusement to be smitten by the hand of death, to go to your death-bed with your physician's voice in your ear, "Nothing can be done for you, you may linger for a little while, but you must die." When the death-struggle comes on, when death gets you, when the grim monster shakes you till you feel every bone rattle, when they wipe the death sweat of the last conflict from your brow, when the darkness steals over your eyes, when your extremities chill with death, when the voice is choked, when the death-rattle is in your throat, oh! sirs, you will not laugh then, you will not say these things are fancies, you will have no hard words in those last moments against those who warned you. Men laughed at Noah when he built his ark upon dry land, but when they were climbing to the mountain tops to escape the inundating waves, they had no material for jest and satire. Then their tears, and cries, and groans proved that they felt the truth of Noah's preaching of righteousness. It will be so with you; mark, whosoever shall be the witness of it; you will find death no child's play. And then comes the judgment. The heavens are on fire, the earth is shaking; the judge is sitting and the books are opened, will you laugh then when you hear your name proclaimed with the addition "Come to judgment, come away?" When the fire-eye of the Judge shall be fixed upon you, and he shall turn to that page which records your deeds, and shall solemnly read them while men and angels hear. Sinner! Sinner! it is enough to drive the laughter out of thee this morning if thou wouldst but hear even the distant echo of the awful voice which shall pronounce the sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." After the judgment, what comes then, sinner? Then cometh wrath without end. God will deal with thee. His bare arm shall smite you. Beware, lest he tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver you. In eternity, mercy's gates are shut; God's longsuffering is now over. Justice commences its awful work. Soul, thou wilt have no merry jests in hell; thou wilt find no laughter there at God's mysteries. Oh, ye may go on trifling now, my hearers, but then ye will not. Ye may say, a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, but there will be none of it then. Oh, how you will look back upon the misspent past and wish, but wish in vain, that you had never been created, sooner than that ye should have lived to lose your only hope of salvation, your only time in which you might find salvation. O God, my God, I beseech thee plead with men, for we are weak; plead with them, and make them feel that neither death, nor judgment, nor hell, are things to be trifled with! Will you remember, ye who are the butterflies of the day, the insects who flit from flower to flower, remember that Christ did not trifle when he came into the world to save souls. His was no life spent in the polished refinements of gaiety; his was stern awful life; his was a zeal that ate him up. When he sweat great drops of blood, it was no light burden he had to carry upon those blessed shoulders, and when he poured out his heart, it was no weak effort he was making for the salvation of his people. Ah, sinner! ah, sinner! was Christ in earnest, and are you foolish? Was Christ in earnest, I say, and do you despise, do you forget, do you neglect this great salvation? I may add, the ministers whom God sends are in earnest. I can say at this moment, I do feel a longing for

the conversion of my hearers, such as I cannot describe. I would count it a high privilege if I might sleep in death this morning, if that death could redeem your souls from hell. But why is it that we can feel—Oh that we felt more!—why is it that we can weep when you do not? What is your soul to us compared with what it must be to you? If we warn you and you perish, your blood will not be required at our hand; it is only if we are cold and indifferent, that we shall be held responsible; but when we have poured out our heart unto you, when we have stretched out our arms, and like a loving mother with a child, have sought to bring you to the arms of Jesus, we have done all that we can do, we must leave the rest with God. But how is it, why is it that *you* can trifle? It is your own salvation, not mine; it is your own eternal state; it is you that will lie for ever in the pit, or joyously climb to heaven; it is you sinner, yourself, not your neighbour, not the person that is sitting next to you, but you, standing there in the crowd, or you yonder—each of you personally. Oh! why should *we* be earnest and *you* be dull? God forgive you this sin, and forbid you to trifle longer.

But lastly, you will find God to be in earnest when he comes to punish you; when he lets loose his terrors on you, you shall find it no sport; when the arrow which is to-day fitted to the string shall be let fly, ye shall find it to be no babe's toy; when the sword which has been long in furbishing, and which is bathed in heaven, shall begin to cut, ye may say to it, "Oh, sword, when wilt thou rest, when wilt thou be quiet;" but it will know no rest, for it will be awfully and solemnly in earnest with you, punishing you for your sins. Would now that one could awake you; would that every heart here felt the need of whole heartedness towards God; but you will not mind it, you will go away, and I shall be unto you as one that playeth a tune upon a goodly instrument, and it will all be forgotten. There was a tear just now—perhaps rather a tear of sympathy excited by earnestness than a tear from your own hearts, for your own case, but you will go away and forget it all, and you will come again and forget it again; and we shall go on praying with you, and preaching to you, but you will forget it; and one day it will be said, "So-and-so is dead, he died without a hope;" and though it will be some consolation, yet what a sad one for the minister to be able to say, "Well, as in the sight of God, I did all I could, I did warn, teach, exhort, and plead with him." Oh! how much better if God shall bless the Word to you, and we shall hear you tell that he took you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock and established your goings. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Faith in Christ is the great way of salvation. Trust Jesus, trust him with all thy heart, and thou art saved this morning, and thy sins are gone; and when thou art saved thyself, I pray thee forget not what I have tried to instil this morning—that if we serve God with all our heart we shall prosper in his ways; and that we cannot expect to see his blessing upon anything that we do, unless we do it as unto the Lord and not unto men.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREEFOLD SANCTIFICATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 9TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Sanctified by God the Father."—Jude 1.
"Sanctified in Christ Jesus."—1 Corinthians i. 2.
"Through sanctification of the Spirit."—1 Peter i. 2.

MARK, beloved, the union of the Three Divine Persons in all their gracious acts. We believe that there is one God, and although we rejoice to recognize the Trinity, yet it is ever most distinctly a Trinity *in Unity*, Our watch-word still is—"Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD." How unwisely do those young believers talk, who make preferences in the Persons of the Trinity; who think of Christ as if he were the embodiment of everything that is lovely and gracious, while the Father they regard as severely just, but destitute of kindness; and how foolish are those who magnify the decree of the Father, or the atonement of the Son, so as to depreciate the work of the Spirit. In deeds of grace none of the Persons of the Trinity act apart from the rest. They are as united in their deeds as in their essence. In their love towards the chosen they are one, and in the actions which flow from that great central source they are still undivided. Specially I would have you notice this in the case of sanctification. While we may without the slightest mistake speak of sanctification as the work of the Spirit, yet we must take heed that we do not view it as if the Father and the Son had no part therein. It is correct to speak of sanctification as the work of the Father, of the Spirit, and of the Son. Still doth Jehovah say, "Let *us* make man in our own image after our likeness," and thus we are "*his* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

My brethren, I beg you to notice and carefully consider the value which God sets upon real holiness, since the Three Persons are represented as co-working to produce a Church without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Those men who despise holiness of heart are in direct conflict with God. Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God buildeth up his living temple. We read in Scripture of the "beauties of holiness;" nothing is beautiful before God but that which is holy. All the glory of Lucifer, that son of the morning, could not screen him from divine abhorrence when he had defiled himself by sin. "Holy, Holy, Holy,"—the continual cry of cherubim is the loftiest

song that creature can offer, and the noblest that the Divine Being can accept. See then, He counteth holiness to be his choice treasure. It is as the seal upon his heart, and as the signet upon his right hand. He could as soon cease to be as cease to be holy, and sooner renounce the sovereignty of the world than tolerate anything in his presence contrary to purity, righteousness, and holiness. I pray you, ye who profess to be followers of Christ, set a high value upon purity of life and godliness of conversation. Value the blood of Christ as the foundation of your hope, but never speak disparagingly of the work of the Spirit which is your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; yea, rather, prize it; prize it so heartily that you dread the very appearance of evil. Prize it so that in your most ordinary actions you may be "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, shewing forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

My design was to have entered at large upon the doctrine of sanctification this morning. I intended to use the word "sanctification" in the mode in which it is understood among theologians; for you must know that the term "sanctification" has a far narrower meaning in bodies of divinity than it has in Scripture; but in studying the subject I found myself lost in its ever widening extent, so that I concluded to attempt less in the hope of efficiently doing more. On some future occasion we will enter at length into the Spirit's work, but now I only call attention to the fact that sanctification is treated in Scripture in various ways. I think we may do some service in illuminating the understanding of believers, if we shall this morning draw their attention not to the theological but to the Scriptural uses of the term "sanctification," and show that, in God's holy Word, it has a much wider meaning than is accorded to it by systematic divines. It has been well said that the Book of God, like the works of God, is not systematically arranged. How different is the freedom of nature from the orderly precision of the scientific museum! If you visit the British Museum you see all the animals there placed in cases according to their respective orders. You go into God's world and find dog and sheep, horse and cow, lion and vulture, elephant and ostrich, roaming abroad as if no zoology had ever ventured to arrange them in classes. The various rocks are not laid in order as the geologist draws them in his books, nor are the stars marked off according to their magnitudes. The order of Nature is variety. Science does but arrange and classify, so as to assist the memory. So systematic divines, when they come to deal with God's Word, find Scriptural truths put, not in order for the class-room, but for common life. The systematic divine is as useful as the analytical chemist, or the anatomist, but still the Bible is not arranged as a body of divinity. It is a hand-book to heaven; it is a guide to eternity, meant for the man at the plough, as much as for the scholar at his table. It is a primer for babes, as well as a classic for sages. It is the humble, ignorant man's book, and though there are depths in it in which the elephant may swim, yet there are shallows where the lamb may wade. We bless God that he has not given us a body of divinity in which we might lose ourselves, but that he has given us his own Word, put into the very best practical form for our daily use and edification.

It is a recognised truth among us, that the Old Testament very often helps us to understand the New, while the New also expounds the Old. With God's Word self interpretation is the best. "Diamond cut diamond" is a rule with a goldsmith; so must it be with a Scriptural student. They who would know best God's Word must study it in its own light. Now, in the Old Testament we find the word "sanctify" very frequently indeed, and it is used there in three senses. Let me call your attention to the *first* one. The word "sanctify" in the Old Testament frequently has the meaning of *setting apart.* It means the taking of something which was common before, which might legitimately have been put to ordinary uses, and setting it apart for God's service alone. It was then called sanctified or holy. Take, for instance, the passage in the 13th chapter of Exodus at the 2nd verse. "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn." On account of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, God claimed the first-born of men and the first-born of cattle to be his. The tribe of Levi was set apart to be the representatives of the first-born, to stand before the Lord to minister day and night in his tabernacle and in his temple, hence those who were thus set apart to be priests and Levites were said to be sanctified. There is another earlier use of the term in the 2nd chapter of Genesis, at the 3rd verse. It is said, "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." It had been an ordinary portion of time before, but he set it apart for his own service, that on the seventh day man should do no work for himself, but rest and serve his Maker. So in Leviticus xxvii. 14, you read, "And when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the Lord," &c., which was meant as a direction to devout Jews who set apart a house or field to be God's; intending that either the produce of the field or the occupation of the house should be wholly given either to God's priests or Levites, or in some other way set apart to holy uses. Now, nothing was done to the house; there were no ceremonies; we do not read that it was cleansed or washed or sprinkled with blood; but the mere fact that it was set apart for God was considered to be a sanctification. So in the most notable of instances in the Book of Exodus xxix. 44, we read that God said "I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar," by which plainly enough was meant that he would set it apart to be his house, the special place of his abode, where between the wings of the cherubim the bright light of the Shekinah might shine forth, the glorious evidence that the Lord God dwelt in the midst of his people. To the same effect are such as the following. The sanctification of the altar, instruments and vessels, in Numbers vii. 1, the setting apart of Eleazer the son of Abinadab, to keep the ark of the Lord while it was at Kirjathjearim, 1 Samuel vii. 1, and the establishment of cities of refuge in Joshua xx. 7, where in the original we find that the word rendered "appointed" is the same which elsewhere is translated "sanctified." It plainly appears from the Old Testament that the word "sanctify" sometimes has the meaning simply and only of setting apart for holy uses. This explains a text in John x. 36, "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, 'thou blasphemest,' because I said I am the Son of God?" Jesus Christ there speaks of himself as "sanctified" by his Father.

Now he was not purged from sin, for he had none. Immaculately conceived, gloriously preserved from all touch or stain of evil, he needed no sanctifying work of the Spirit within him to purge him from dross or corruption. All that is here intended is that he was set apart. So in that notable and well known passage in John xvii. 19, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth;" by which again he meant only that he gave up himself specially to God's service, to be occupied only with his Father's business. He could say, "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." Brethren, you understand now the text in Jude, "Sanctified by God the Father." Surely it means that God the Father has specially set apart his people or sanctified them. Not that God the Father works operatively in the believer's heart, although Paul tells us it is God that worketh in us to will and to do—that belongs immediately and effectively to the Holy Spirit—but He in the decree of election separated unto himself a people who were to be sanctified to himself for ever and ever; He by the gift of his Son for them redeemed them from among men that they might be holy; and He by continually sending forth the Spirit fulfils his divine purpose that they should be a separate people sanctified from all the rest of mankind. In this sense every Christian is perfectly sanctified already. We may speak of believers as those who are sanctified by God the Father, that is to say, they are set apart. They were set apart before they were created, they were legally set apart by the purchase of Christ, they are manifestly and visibly set apart by the effectual calling of the Spirit of grace. They are, I say, in this sense at all periods sanctified; and speaking of the work as it concerns God the Father, they are completely sanctified unto the Lord for ever.

Is not this doctrine clear enough to you all? Leave the doctrine a moment, and let us look at it practically. Brothers and sisters, have we ever realized this truth as we ought to do? When a vessel, cup, altar, or instrument was set apart for divine worship, it was never used for common purposes again. No man but the priest might drink out of the golden cup; the altar might not be trifled with; God's brazen laver was not for ordinary ablution; even the tongs upon the altar and the snuffers for the lamps were never to be profaned for any common purpose whatsoever. What a suggestive and solemn fact is this! If you and I be sanctified by God the Father, we ought never to be used for any purpose but for God. "What," say you, "not for ourselves?" My brethren, not for ourselves. Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. "But must we not work and earn our own bread?" Verily ye must, but still not with that as your object. You must still be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Remember, if ye be servants, ye are to serve not with eye service as men pleasers, but serving the Lord. If any man shall say "I have an occupation in which I cannot serve the Lord," leave it, you have no right in it; but I think there is no calling in which man can be found, certainly no lawful calling, in which he may not be able to say, "Whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I do all to the glory of God." The Christian is no more a common man than was the altar a common place. It is as great a sacrilege for the believer to live unto himself, or to live unto the

world, as though you and I could have profaned the most holy place, used the holy fire for our own kitchen, or the censer for common perfume, or the candlestick for our own chamber. These things were God's, none might venture to appropriate them, and we are God's and must be used only for Him. Oh, Christians, would that ye could know this! Ye are Christ's men, God's men; servants of God through Jesus Christ. Ye are not to do your own works, ye are not to live for your own objects. Ye are to say at all times, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus;" you are practically to take this for your motto, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." I fear me, nine out of ten of professing Christians have never recognized this fact. They think if they were to devote a part of their substance that would do, or a part of their time will suffice. Oh! Christ did not buy a part of you; men and brethren, Jesus Christ did not purchase a part of you! He bought you entire, body, soul, and spirit, and he must have you, the whole man. Oh, if ye are to be partly saved by him and partly by yourselves, then live to yourselves; but if God hath wholly set you apart to be vessels of mercy fitted for his use, oh, do not rob the Lord; treat not as common cups those things which are as the bowls of the altar.

There is another practical thought here. It was a crime which brought destruction upon Babylon when Belshazzar in his drunken frolic cried, "Bring forth the cups of the Lord, the goodly spoil of the temple at Jerusalem." They brought the golden candlestick, and there it stood flaming high in the midst of the marble hall. The despot, surrounded by his wives and his concubines, filled high the bowl with the foaming draught, and bidding them pass round the cups of Jehovah, the heathen, the worshippers of idols, drank confusion to the God of heaven and earth. In that moment, just as the sacred vessel touched the sacrilegious lip, a hand was seen mysteriously writing out his doom: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." This was the crime which filled up the ephah of his sin. Now was the measure of his iniquity fully accomplished. He had used for lascivious and drunken purposes vessels which belonged to Jehovah, the God of the whole earth. Oh, take heed, take heed, ye that profess to be sanctified by the blood of the covenant, that you reckon it not to be an unholy thing. See to it that ye make not your bodies which ye profess to be set apart to God's service, slaves of sin, or your members servants of iniquity unto iniquity, lest, O ye professors, ye should hear in that hour the voice of the recording angel as he cries, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord; and ye beloved who hope that ye are Christ's, and have a humble faith in him this morning, see that ye walk circumspectly, that by no means ye prostitute to the service of sin that which was set apart in the eternal covenant of grace to be God's alone. If you and I are tempted to sin, we must reply "No, let another man do that, but I cannot; I am God's man; I am set apart for him; 'how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'" Let dedication enforce sanctification. Think of the dignity to which God has called you—Jehovah's vessels, set apart for the Master's use. Far hence, far hence be everything which would make you impure. When Antiochus Epiphanes offered a sow on the altar of the

Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, his awful death might have been easily foretold. Oh! how many there are who make a high profession who have offered unclean flesh upon the altars of God; have made religion a stalking-horse to their own emolument; and espoused the faith to gain esteem and applause among men! What saith the Lord concerning such? "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord"—Heb. x. 30. Their god was their belly; they gloried in their shame; they minded earthly things; they die justly accursed. Spots are they in your solemn feasts; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. But, ye beloved, be not carried away with the error of the wicked, but keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

II. Secondly; in the Old Testament, the word "sanctify" is now and then used in another sense, one which I do not perceive to be hinted at in our Biblical Cyclopœdias, but which is needed to make the subject complete. The word "sanctify" is used, not only to signify that the thing is set apart for holy uses, *but that it is to be regarded, treated, and declared as a holy thing.* To give you an instance. There is a passage in Isaiah viii. 13, which is to the point, when it is said—"Sanctify the Lord of Hosts, himself." You clearly perceive that the Lord does not need to be set apart for holy uses; and again, that the Lord of Hosts needs not to be purified, for he is Holiness itself. It means, adore and reverence the Lord, with fear and trembling approach his throne, regard him as the Holy One of Israel. But let me give you other instances. When Nadab and Abihu, as recorded in the tenth of Leviticus, offered sacrifice to God and put strange fire on the altar, the fire of the Lord went forth and consumed them, and this was the reason given—"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me;" by which he did not mean that he would be set apart, nor yet that he would be made holy by purification, but that he would be treated and regarded as a most Holy Being with whom such liberties were not to be taken. And again in Numbers xx. 12, on that unfortunate occasion when Moses lost his temper and smote the rock twice, saying, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" The Lord said, that he should see the promised land but should never enter it, the reason being, "Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel;" by which he meant that they had not so acted as to honour God's name among the people. A yet more familiar instance, occurs in what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer," "Our Father which art in heaven, sanctified be thy name." The word "hallowed" is simply an English variation, the Greek is "*sanctified* be thy name." Now we know that God's name does not need purifying, or setting apart; so that the sense here can only be "Let thy name be reverenced and adored throughout the whole earth, and let men regard it as being a sacred and holy thing."

My beloved brethren, have we not some light here concerning our second text—"Sanctified in Christ Jesus." If the word "sanctified" may mean "regarded as holy and treated as such," can you not see how in Christ Jesus the saints are regarded by God as being holy, and treated [illegible]? Mark, we do not lay that down as being the only meaning of the text, for we shall have to show that another sense may be

attached to it. There have been certain brethren who have enlarged upon our being sanctified in Christ, and have almost forgotten the work of the Spirit. Now, if they only speak of our being sanctified in Christ, in the sense of being treated as holy, in fact as being justified, we have no quarrel with them; but if they deny the work of the Spirit, they are guilty of deadly error. I have sometimes heard the term used, "Imputed sanctification;" which is sheer absurdity. You cannot even use the term, "Imputed justification." "Imputed righteousness" is correct enough, and implies a glorious doctrine; but justification is not imputed, it is actually conferred. We are justified through the imputed righteousness of Christ, but as to being imputedly sanctified, no one who understands the use of language can so speak. The term is inaccurate and unscriptural. I know it is said that the Lord Jesus is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; but this sanctification is not by imputation, nor does the text say so. Why, you might as readily prove imputed wisdom, or imputed redemption by this text, as force it to teach imputed sanctification. It is a fact that for the sake of what Jesus Christ did, God's people, though in themselves but partially sanctified as being yet subject to sin, are for Christ's sake treated and regarded as if they were perfectly holy. But this, according to theological definitions is rather justification than sanctification; it must however be admitted that the Scripture sometimes uses the word "sanctification" in such a manner as to make it tantamount to justification. This, however, we can clearly see, that God's people have access with boldness to the Lord, because they are regarded through Christ as though they were perfectly holy. Oh! brethren, think of this for a moment. A holy God cannot have dealings with unholy men. A holy God—and is not Christ Jesus God?—cannot have communion with unholiness, and yet you and I are unholy. How then does Christ receive us to his bosom? How does his Father walk with us and find himself agreed? Because he views us, not in ourselves, but in our great federal Head, the Second Adam. He looks at us,

> "Not as we were in Adam's fall,
> When sin and ruin covered all;
> But as we'll stand another day,
> Fairer than sun's meridian ray."

He looks on the deeds of Christ as ours; on his perfect obedience and sinless life as ours, and thus we may sing in the language of Hart—

> "With thy spotless garments on,
> Holy as the Holy One,"

We may boldly enter into that which is within the veil, where no unholy thing may come, yet where we may venture because God views us as holy in Christ Jesus. This is a great and precious doctrine; but still, since the use of the term "sanctification" in any other sense than that in which it is commonly emplyoned as meaning the work of the Spirit, tends to foster confused notions, and really does I fear lead some to despise the work of the Spirit of God, I think it is better in ordinary conversation between Christians, for them to speak of sanctification without confounding it with what is quite a distinct act,

namely, justification through the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yet, if we hear a brother so talk, we must not be too severe upon him, as though he assuredly erred from the faith, for in Scripture, the terms "sanctification" and "justification" are frequently used interchangeably, and Christ's righteousness made the subject-matter of both works of grace.

III. We now come to the usual sense in which the word "sanctification" is employed. It means *actually to purify or make holy;* not merely to set apart nor to account holy, but to make really and actually so in nature. You have the word in this sense in many places in the Old Testament. You will find it in Exodus xix. 10, 11, 12. On the third day God was about to proclaim on the top of Sinai his holy law, and the mandate went forth, "Sanctify the people to-day and to-morrow," which sanctification consisted in certain outward deeds by which their bodies and clothes were put into a cleanly state and their souls were brought into a reverential state of awe. In the third of Joshua you find when the children of Israel were about to pass the Jordan, it was said, "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." They were to prepare themselves to be beholders of a scene so august, when Jordan was driven back, and the river was utterly dried up before the feet of the priests of God. There was in this case an actual purification. Men in the old times were sprinkled with blood, and thus sanctified from defilement, and considered to be pure in the sight of God. Now this is the sense in which we view our third text, "Sanctification through the Spirit," and this, I repeat, is the general sense in which we understand it in common conversation among Christian men.

Sanctification begins in regeneration. The Spirit of God infuses into man the new principle called the spirit, which is a third and higher nature, so that the believing man becomes body, soul, *and spirit*, and in this he is distinct and distinguished from all other men of the race of Adam. This work, which begins in regeneration, is carried on in two ways, by vivification and by mortification; that is, by giving life to that which is good, and by sending death to that which is evil in the man; mortification, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under; and vivification, by which the life which God has put within us is made to be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. This is carried on every day in what we call perseverance, by which the Christian is preserved and continued in a gracious state, and is made to abound in good works unto the praise and glory of God; and it culminates or comes to perfection in "glory," when the soul being thoroughly purged is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Now, this work, though we commonly speak of it as being the work of the Spirit, is quite as much the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as of the Spirit. In looking for texts on the subject, I have been struck with the fact, that where I found one verse speaking of it as the Spirit's work, I found another in which it was treated as the work of Jesus Christ. I can well understand that my second text, "Sanctified in Christ Jesus," has as great a fulness of meaning as the third, "Sanctification through the Spirit." Lend me your attention. I fear that not many of you will be interested, except those of you

who have a share in this precious work, others may think the subject too dry for them. Oh that they may yet know how precious to a believer is the purifying work of sanctification.

Sanctification is a work *in* us, not a work *for* us. It is a work in us, and there are two agents: one is the worker who works this sanctification effectually—that is the Spirit: and the other, the agent, the efficacious means by which the Spirit works this sanctification is—Jesus Christ and his most precious blood. Suppose, to put it as plainly as we can; there is a garment which needs to be washed. Here is a person to wash it, and there is a bath in which it is to be washed—the person is the Holy Spirit, but the bath is the precious blood of Christ. It is strictly correct to speak of the person cleansing as being the sanctifier: it is quite as accurate to speak of that which is in the bath and which makes it clean as being the sanctifier too. Now, the Spirit of God sanctifies us; he works it effectively; but he sanctifies us through the blood of Christ, through the water which flowed with the blood from Christ's side. To repeat my illustration: here is a garment which is black; a fuller, in order to make it white, uses nitre and soap, both the fuller and the soap are cleansers; so both the Holy Spirit and the atonement of Christ are sanctifiers. I think that will be plain enough. Let us enlarge upon the doctrine. The Spirit of God is the great worker by whom we are cleansed. I shall not, this morning, quote the texts. Most of you have the "Baptist Confession of Faith,"* and the "Catechism," which are generally distributed among the families of the Church. They will furnish you with abundance of texts on that subject, for this is a doctrine which is generally received among us—that it is the Spirit of God who creates in us a new heart and a right spirit, according to the tenor of the covenant—"A new heart will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." "I will put my Spirit within them, and they shall walk in my ways." He renews and changes the nature—turns the bias of the will—makes us seek after that which is good and right; so that every good thing in us may be described as "the fruit of the Spirit," and all our virtues and all our graces are efficiently worked in us by the Spirit of the living God. Never, I pray you, brethren, never, never forget this. Oh, it will be an ill day for any Church when the members begin to think lightly of the work of the Holy Spirit within us! We delight to magnify the work of Christ *for* us, but we must not depreciate the work of the blessed Spirit *in* us. In the days of my venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, who was in the opinion even of ultra-Calvanists, sound to the core, this pernicious evil broke out in our Church. There were some who believed in what was called "Imputed Sanctification," and denied the work of the blessed Spirit. I was reading last night in our old Church-book a note written there in the doctor's own hand-writing, as the deliberate opinion of this Church.—"Agreed: That to deny the internal sanctification of the Spirit, as a principle of grace and holiness wrought in the heart, or as consisting of grace communicated to and implanted in the soul, which, though but a begun work, and as yet incomplete, is an abiding work of grace, and will abide, notwithstanding all corruptions, temptations, and snares,

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and be performed by the Author of it until the day of Christ, when it will be the saints' meetness for eternal glory; is a greivous error, which highly reflects dishonour on the blessed Spirit and his operations of grace on the heart, is subversive of true religion and powerful godliness, and renders persons unfit for Church communion. Wherefore, it is further agreed, that such persons who appear to have embraced this error be not admitted to the communion of this Church; and should any such who are members of it appear to have received it and continued in it, that they be forthwith excluded from it." Two members then present declaring themselves to be of the opinion condemned in the above resolution, and also a third person who was absent, but who was well known to have been under this awful delusion, were consequently excluded that evening. Nay, more, a person of another Church who held the opinion thus condemned was forbidden to commune at the table, and his pastor at Kettering was written to upon the subject, warning him not to allow so great an errorist to remain in fellowship. So that the doctor thought the error to be so deadly, that he used the pruning knife at once; he did not stop till it spread, but he cut off the very twigs; and this is one of the benefits of Church discipline when we are enabled to carry it out under God, that it does nip error in the very bud, and thus those who as yet are not infected are kept from it by the blessed providence of God through the instrumentality of the Church. We have always held, and still hold and teach, that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ's image, is as absolutely necessary for our salvation, as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which he cleanses us from our sins.

Pause here one moment, and let me not distract your minds while I say, that while the Spirit of God is said in Scripture to be the author of sanctification, yet there is a visible agent which must not be forgotten. "Sanctify them," said Christ, "through thy *truth*. Thy word is truth." Young men of the Bible class, look out the passages of Scripture which prove that the instrument of our sanctification is the Word of God. You will find that there are very many. It is the Word of God which sanctifies the soul. The Spirit of God brings to our minds the commands and precepts and doctrines of truth, and applies them with power. These are heard in the ear, and being received in the heart, they work in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. How important then that the truth should be preached. How necessary that you never tolerate a ministry which leaves out the great doctrines or the great precepts of the Gospel. The truth is the sanctifier, and if we do not hear the truth, depend upon it we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths." Do not say of such-and-such an error, "Oh, it is a mere matter of opinion." If it be a mere matter of opinion to-day, it will be a matter of practice to-morrow. No man has an error of judgment, without sooner or later having an error in practice. As every grain of truth is a grain of diamond dust, prize it all. Hold fast the truth which ye have received and which ye have been taught. "Hold fast the form of sound words;" and in this day when articles are ridiculed, when creeds are despised, hold fast to that which ye have received that ye may be

"faithful among the faithless found;" for by so holding the truth shall ye be sanctified by the Spirit of God. The agent, then, is the Spirit of God working through the truth.

But now let me bring you back to my old figure. In another sense we are sanctified through Christ Jesus, because it is his blood and the water which flowed from his side in which the Spirit washes our heart from the defilement and propensity of sin. It is said of our Lord,—"Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing." Remember again, "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." I say, again, there are hundreds of texts of this kind. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." In that memorable passage where Paul, struggling with corruption, exclaims, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the answer is not concerning the Holy Spirit; but he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Space forbids the multiplication of texts; but there are many passages to the effect that our sanctification is the work of Jesus Christ. He is our sanctifier, for He filled the sacred laver of regeneration in which we are washed, filled it with the blood and with the water which flowed from his side, and in this by the Holy Spirit we are washed. There is no being sanctified by the law; the Spirit does not use legal precepts to sanctify us: there is no purification by mere dictates of morality, the Spirit of God does not use them. No, just as when Marah's waters were bitter, Moses to make them sweet commanded them to take a tree and cast it into the waters, and they were sweet; so the Spirit of God, finding our natures bitter, taketh the tree of Calvary, casteth it into the stream, and everything is made pure. He finds us [illegible], and to make us clean he dips the hyssop of faith in the precious blood, and sprinkles it upon us and we are clean. There is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of Christ not merely to make satisfaction for sin, but to work the death of sin. The blood appears before God and He is well pleased; it falls on us—lusts wither, and old corruptions feel the death-stroke. Dagon falls before the ark, and although the stump thereof is left, and corruptions still remain, yet Christ shall put an end to all our inbred sins, and through him we shall mount to heaven perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Just as the Spirit only works through the truth, so the blood of Christ only works through *faith*. Young men of the Catechumen and Bible classes, again I say, turn to your Bibles at your leisure, and find out the many passages which speak of faith as sanctifying the soul, and purifying the mind. Our faith lays hold on the precious atonement of Christ. It sees Jesus suffering on the tree, and it says—"I vow revenge against the sins which nailed him there;" and thus his precious blood works in us a detestation of all sin, and the Spirit through the truth, working by faith, applies the precious blood of sprinkling, and we are

made clean, and are accepted in the beloved. I am afraid that I have confused and darkened counsel with words; but yet, I think, I may have suggested some trains of thought which will lead you to see that Holy Scripture teaches us a sanctification, not narrow and concise so as to be written down with a short definition as in our creed-books, but wide, large, and expansive. A work in which we are sanctified by God the Father, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and yet have our sanctification through the Spirit of God. Oh! my dear hearers, strive after practical holiness. You that love Christ, do not let any say of you—"There is a Christian, but he is worse than other men." It is not our eloquence, our learning, our fame, our wealth, that can ever commend Christ to the world; it is the holy living of Christians. I was speaking, the other day, to a brother minister about this Bi-centenary movement, which I fear will be an immense injury to Christ's Church. I feared lest it should be made an opportunity for strife among brethren; error must be corrected, but love must not be wounded. He remarked, and I thought it was so truthful, that the only way by which Dissent flourished of old was, by the then superior holiness of its ministers, so that whilst the Church clergyman was hunting, the Dissenting minister was visiting the sick, and said he, "This is the way in which we shall lose power, if our ministers become political and worldly, it will be all over with us." I have never shunned to rebuke, when I thought it necessary, but I hate contention. The only allowable strife is to labour who can be the most holy, the most earnest, the most zealous, who can do the most for the poor and the ignorant, and who can lift Christ's cross the highest. This is the way to lift up the members of any one particular denomination—by the members of that body being more devout, more sanctified, more spiritual-minded than the others. All mere party fightings will only gender strife, and animosities, and bickerings, and are not of the Spirit of God; but to live unto God and to be devoted to him—this is the strength of the Church; this will give us the victory, God helping us, and unto his name shall be all the praise.

As for persons here who are not converted, and are unregenerate, I cannot address them about sanctification. I have opened a door this morning, but you cannot enter. Only remember, that if you cannot enter into this, you cannot enter into heaven, for

> "Those holy gates for ever bar,
> Pollution, sin, and shame;
> None shall obtain admission there,
> But followers of the Lamb."

May it be yours, to come humbly and confess your sin, and ask and find forgiveness, and then, but not till then, there is hope that you may be sanctified in the Spirit of your mind. The Lord bless you for Jesu's sake.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OBTAINING PROMISES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 16TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who through faith obtained promises."—Hebrews xi. 33.

THE promises of God are to the believer an inexhaustible mine of wealth. Happy is it for him if he knows how to search out their secret veins and enrich himself with their hid treasures. They are to him an armoury containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter into the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and to the sword. They are to the believer a surgery in which he will find all manner of restoratives and blessed elixirs; he shall find therein an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knoweth how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God. The promises are to the Christian a storehouse of food. They are as the granaries which Joseph built in Egypt, or as the golden pot wherein the unrotting manna was preserved. Blessed is he who can take the five barley loaves and fishes of promise and break them till his five thousand necessities shall all be supplied, and he is able to gather up baskets full of fragments. The promises are the Christian's Magna Charta of liberty, they are the title deeds of his heavenly estate. Happy is he who knoweth how to read them well and call them all his own. Yea, they are the jewel room in which the Christian's crown-treasures are preserved—the regalia, secretly his to-day, but which he shall openly wear in paradise. He is already a king who hath the silver key with which to unlock the strong room; he may even now grasp the sceptre, wear the crown, and put upon his shoulders the imperial mantle. O how unutterably rich are the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God! If we had here the tongue of the mightiest of human orators, and if that tongue could be touched with a live coal from off the altar, yet still it could not utter a tenth of the praises of the exceeding great and precious promises of God. Nay, they who have entered into rest, and have had their tongues attuned to the lofty and rapturous eloquence of cherubim and seraphim, even they can never tell the height and depth, the length and breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ which are stored up in the treasure-house of God—the promises of the covenant of his grace. See, then, my brethren, how needful it is that you and I should know the heavenly art of by faith "obtaining promises."

Furthermore, all things under the covenant of grace are by promise. The law had blessings for works. What shall I say? It had only curses for transgressors, since the blessings were never obtained by any who were under the law. But the covenant of grace saith not, "Do this and live," but it saith, "I will," and "thou shalt." It saith not, "He that doeth these things shall live by them;" but, "at such-and-such a time will I visit you and ye shall be blessed." Mention anything you will which is contained in the covenant, and I will show it is by promise. Speak we of adoption? "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise, these are counted for the seed." Speak you of inheritance? Then "God gave it to Abraham by promise," we are the "heirs of promise;" "and this is the promise that he hath promised us even eternal life." The covenants are described by Paul as being the "covenants of promise." Even the Gospel itself is in the first chapter of the Romans, at the second verse, spoken of as "the Gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures." Life eternal is described as the "promise of eternal life." We, brethren, look for the "promise of his coming;" and after that we, "according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." So that if we should begin at the beginning and run on till we come to the close of the catalogue of divine blessings which are bestowed upon us through grace, we might say of them all, "These are *promised* covenant mercies." How needful then—in what a tenfold degree is it absolutely necessary that you and I should know how to obtain the promises and see them fulfilled; for if not,—failing to obtain the promise, we have lost all things and are of all men the most miserable.

I would try this morning to explain the text, understanding it in two senses. First, some reader might think it means *obtaining the promises in themselves*. Perhaps, a more thoughtful reader would perceive that it may be better understood as *obtaining the fulfilment of the promises;* the phrase means certainly both, but we think that the mind of the Spirit is most fully expressed by the second sense.

I. It is certain that holy men of old, and that good men now, do BY FAITH OBTAIN PROMISES.

Let us give you an instance—the memorable case of Abraham. Abraham is bidden by God to offer up his son Isaac. He was already an heir of the promises, but not as yet had they been revealed to him in their utmost length and breadth. Obedient to the divine command he prepares to offer up his son Isaac, his only son, on whom his hope of posterity depended, counting that God was able either of stones to raise up children, or to raise up Isaac again from the dead. He unsheathes the knife to slay his son. He is prevented from the consummation of the deed. God accepts his sacrifice and rewards it with a promise. If you will at your leisure read in Genesis xxii., commencing at the fifteenth verse, and proceeding onwards, you will see it was then that God conferred on Abraham that great charter wherein it was written, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy

shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Now, it was his act of faith which, not meritoriously, but of grace, obtained that noble promise. Brethren, if ye would obtain a promise, your faith must do exploits. When you have made some sacrifice for God, and have been willing in the teeth of human reason to do God's Word as God bids you, you shall then stand on a vantage ground from which you may reach another and a higher promise than as yet you have ever been able to grasp in the hand of your faith. It is not the promise is not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; but to him who like Abraham staggereth not at the promise through unbelief, it shall surely be given to be "heir of the world." To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly. The Spirit of God shall whisper into your soul some promise which shall come home with as much power to you as though an angel from heaven had spoken it to you, and you shall through one act of faith obtain the promise which before was beyond your reach. Another notable instance is given us in the case of David, where it was not so much faith, as an act consequent upon faith, which brought him the promise, namely, a noble wish to serve God by building a house for him. David had been storing up much gold and silver that he might build a house for God, for he said, "Behold I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains." He was not permitted to build the house, but as a reward for his desire to do this for his God, Nathan was sent, and then it was that the covenant was made with David, in which he rejoiced even when expiring, because it was "ordered in all things and sure." Then Nathan said to him, "And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: but I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore." Now, brethren, if you and I would obtain the promise, if we would have them spoken home to us with a force as great as if they consisted of novel words for the first time uttered by some seraphic lips, we must resolve to do some great thing for God; and he who expects the grace-indited wishes of his children, will in return lead them into some inner chamber of new delights which they had not known before. To quote yet another instance. Joshua was about to invade the land of Canaan, and therefore before his arduous enterprise the Lord gave him a new promise. His faith led him to the brink of Jordan, the borders of the promise land, and then and there he by faith obtained a blessed promise, which we will read for our comfort, remembering that venturing in the path of duty upon great enterprises, we may expect to see him to win new promises. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever

thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." One more instance may not be amiss. God sometimes gives his people fresh promises by faith just before a trial is about to come upon them. It was so with Elijah. God said to him, "Go to the brook Cherith, behold I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." This was at the beginning of the famine. There he abode, and God fulfilled the promise, for by faith Elijah had obtained it. Acting upon faith, still dependant upon God, he abides at Cherith, and as the result of this faith, God gives him a fresh promise, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath—I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." The faith which received the first promise obtained the honour of a second. So with you and with me. If we have had a little promise, and up till now have realised it, if we have lived upon it and made it the stay and support of our souls, surely God will give us another and a greater one, and so, from promise to promise speeding our way, we shall find the promises to be rounds of the ladder which Jacob saw, the top whereof shall reach to heaven. Doubt and be distrustful about the promise that you have, and you cannot expect God to increase his revelation to your soul. Be afraid, stagger through unbelief at that which was laid to your heart yesterday, and you shall not have a new one to-morrow. Oh, that we had power to act as Samson did, who having the promise of God that he should smite the Philistines; with the jaw-bone of an ass, laid them heaps on heaps, never reckoning the odds, but having God with him in child-like simple faith he dashed upon his foes and overcame them. We should go from strength to strength, receiving grace upon grace if we had faith to mount from promise to promise.

But, I hear some one say, "is there such a thing as receiving promises now? They are in the Bible, and we can read them, but can they ever come to us as if they were our own?" Oh, yes, dear friends, and that is the best way in which God's people get at the sweetness of them. I believe in God the Holy Ghost. I believe in his immediate operations in the soul of man. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and would therefore be strange if he did not speak in us now as much as in the age of types and shadows. I am not a disciple of the Quakers, although I believe a descendant of one of their early martyrs, but in some matters I heartily agree with them, as, for instance, in their testimony to the special and direct monitions, directions, and illuminations of the Holy Spirit. Surely, I know that God the Holy Spirit hath dealings with his people to-day, as much as ever he had with the prophets of old, and there are times when he taketh an old text out of the Word, and re-writeth it upon their souls, so that it is as really a revelation fresh from heaven, as though it had never been written in that book before. Bilney, that blessed martyr of Jesus Christ, was much wounded in conscience, by reason of the great sin which, through the weakness of the flesh he had committed, by subscribing to Popish errors; at that time he could get no comfort of soul because of his deep

and continual sense of sin. The Spirit of God took this text, and made it a balm for all his wounds, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Bilney kept that; believing it to be as much his own as if it had never been uttered by Paul, and he went to the stake and burned right bravely for Christ, in the strength of the promise so opportunely given to him. Beza says that once when he had been long in great sorrow and deep distress, this text came with power to him: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Mr. Calamy gives us an instance of a young woman who died triumphantly, being sustained by that well-known word of our divine Lord, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." That man of God, Watts Wilkinson, spoke of that promise, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shall know hereafter," as being often a very sweet consolation to him in mysterious dispensations of Providence. It is not for me to speak at any length of what texts have been my own; but there have been turning points in my history in which I have had promises from God, which have been *to me* as marked and as distinctly from heaven as if they had been spoken by seer or prophet who met me in the way. Never shall I forget one instance, which accounts for my being here at this very hour. When I had resolved to enter college, walking across Midsummer Common, just outside of Cambridge, revolving in my mind the joys of scholarship, and the hope of being something in the world, that text came to my heart, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;" "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto thee." All was given up; everything was renounced, the finest prospects seemed to melt into thin air, merely on the strength of that text, believing that God, even our God, would most certainly fulfil to me his promise if I could keep his precept. Now, if I had told that to another, he might have laughed, but to me it was as solemnly the Word of God as if the heavens had opened, and I had seen that written out in lightning flashes, or heard the thunders of God roll through the sky. I suppose some of you have known the same. One other instance I cannot fail to narrate. When the cholera was here last time, I wended my way from house to house among the sick and dying. I was one day sad at heart, and thought surely my own time was come, for I had seen many deaths and had been at many graves. Walking down the Dover Road, I saw in a window, upon a paper fastened to the glass with four wafers, this verse: "Because thou hast made the Lord, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." I stopped, attracted by the paper in the window, and read it; and this verse I am certain was as much a revelation to my own heart, and I as much obtained that promise, as though an angel had brought it with swift wings from on high. Your experience, brother Christians will furnish similar instances; and though we may be sneered at as fanatical by those who do not understand spiritual impressions from the Holy Ghost, yet know we, and we speak only of what we have tasted and handled of the good Word of

number of the promises. Of some others I must give a second direction. You must not simply believe them, but exercise importunate prayer about them. "Knock and it shall be opened." These promises are not to be had for the mere believing. Of some kind of devils it was said, "This kind goeth not out but with prayer and fasting." Of some sort of promises it may be said, "This kind is not fulfilled but by prayer and importunity." You must knock, and if the gate open not you must knock again, and continue so to do until God shall give the favour. You are certain to have the blessing if you know how to wrestle with the angel, and declare that you will not let him go unless he shall bestow it upon you. A third kind of these promises are not even to be fulfilled by prayer or by faith alone; you must obtain them by earnest seeking after them. "Seek and ye shall find." Where God has appended to the promise a something that is to be done, diligently do it, and you shall obtain the blessing. I hold in my hand a book which is very precious to me. It is my treasure-house, next to the Bible the most valuable indeed, because it is all Scripture—*Clarke's Scripture Promises*. When I have a trial or trouble, since the promises are here all put under different heads, I can turn at once and find just the promise I want. There are many of these sparkling jewels which cannot be won by prayer, nor be obtained by an act of faith alone; for instance such as these: "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." Now, that promise requires something to be done by the Christian, and then the God of peace shall be with him. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." If we refuse to obey God's commandments, our faith will be a dead faith, and our prayer will be presumption; we must obey the Lord's will, and then we shall have the blessing. "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." But here you see, with regard to promises of this kind, and they are very numerous indeed, the *act* of faith must be matured into the *work* of faith; it is not the bare act of faith that gets some promises, not the utterance of faith in prayer; but with these there must be the work, and the fruit, and the patience of faith, or otherwise the clusters hang too high for our reach.

Those three rules contain the pith of what I have to say; but to guide beginners in the divine life, a little more fully let us give a few other regulations.

1. Child of God, babe in grace, wouldst thou obtain the promises? Take this advice first—*meditate much upon them.* There are promises which are like grapes in the wine-press; if thou wilt tread them the juice will flow. Many a time a believer, when he is like Isaac walking in the fields, meditating in the cool of the day upon a promise, unexpectedly meets his Rebekah, the blessing which had tarried long comes on a sudden home. He sought retirement to meditate upon a promise, and lo! "being in the way God met with him." Thinking over the hallowed words will often be the means of fulfilling them. "I was in

God, that there is such a thing as still obtaining the promise afresh from heaven—money from the mint of God like new coin all unworn. Faith, and faith alone, can know the secret of obtaining promises.

Thus I have tried to explain the first meaning of the text.

II. As for the second it is somewhat more practical. By faith these men obtained not merely the giving of the promise, but THE FULFILMENT OF IT.

Now, I shall want your earnest attention, and I hope also your memories will be at work while I try to give some practical regulations for obtaining the fulfilment of the promise. Some persons, however, who have bad memories may think they will get no good. I remember what an old preacher once did when visited by one of his members who said he feared he gained no good for his memory was bad; whereas, in the opinion of all who saw his holy and heavenly walk, he was one of the most profitable of hearers. Two dirty glasses were produced, and into one of them the minister poured water, and after rinsing a while, he poured it out again, and setting it down by the side of the other he said, "Has not the water had effect even though none remains." So let us hope that you may get good even should your memory retain but very little.

God's promises may be divided into two classes. Some of them are unconditional. They are promises of grace, and of these faith does not obtain the fulfilment, but God fulfils them according to his own sovereign will and pleasure according to the purpose of his grace. I mean promises such as those which relate to the calling of the elect at God's time, their being brought out from death to life; their quickening, their conviction, and regeneration. Now, man being before grace utterly dead, powerless and lifeless, it is clear that no faith on his part obtains these promises nor even helps to obtain them; but God, when the predestinated hour is come, saith, "it is a time of love;" and beholding the infant cast out and in its blood, he saith unto it, "Live!" I ought to add, indeed, that even those promises which might be called conditional, are only conditional in a certain sense; for whereas they are conditional in one passage of Scripture you find them unconditional in another. They are conditional only in the order of our attainment and enjoyment of them, but in the plan, purpose, and decree of God, they are all based on unconditional oaths and declarations of eternal love. God saith, "I will" and "they shall," and here the promises all rest.

With regard to many of the promises which have some sort of description appended to them, we must by faith answer the description, or we cannot claim the blessing. Most of them have this condition—"For these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." There are three ways of "obtaining the promise." Many of them only need the outstretched hand to grasp them; you may go with believing faith at once and take the promise, "Ask and ye shall receive." There are many of the promises so readily attainable, that if you are in Christ you may this morning see them fulfilled by simply believing them. Believe them to be true, and you shall have what they promise you. Some of God's promises are like cheques, you present them at the counter and the cash is given; you have but to take the promise stamped by God's own hand, signed and sealed, believe it to be God's, and you shall have the mercy now. This is true of a very large

than that of doubting the veracity of a God of perfection and truth? Come, soul, there is the promise; there it stands before thee. Thou sayest, "I dare not believe it;" but I say, "How darest thou doubt it? where didst thou get thy arrogance from? how canst thou speak so exceeding proudly as thus to think of God and say of him, that he has promised what he cannot or what he will not perform?" Lay much to heart, then, young Christian, the fact that the promise is the very word of God, and surely thou wilt not find it hard to believe, and so to obtain the promise.

3. Then, in the third place, *be sure that thou doest, in the power of the Spirit of God, what the precept annexed to the promise asks of thee.* Follow the example of Moses. Moses knew that there was a promise given to the people of Israel, that they should be the world's blessing; but in order to obtain it, it was necessary that Moses should practise self-denial. What did he? He refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter, counting it better to suffer the reproach of Christ than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. If the promise commands thee to deny thyself thou canst not obtain it without doing so. Do it, and thou hast obtained it. Or, suppose that the promise requires at thy hand courage —use courage. David felt he had a promise from God that he would keep him. He knew that in his past experience God had been faithful. "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." He advanced to the conflict, and the Lord was his deliverer. Go thou forth with thy sling and thy stone, for thou wilt never obtain the promise if thou art afraid to face thy gigantic foe. Or does the promise require obedience at thy hand? Be obedient. Remember how Rahab, the harlot, hung out from her window the scarlet line, because that was the test of her faith. So do thou. Whatsoever Christ hath said unto thee do it. Neglect no command, however trivial it may seem. What if it be non-essential! what hast thou to do with that? Do what thy Master tells thee, asking no questions, for he is an ill servant who questions his Lord's commands. Doubtless thou too, like the Ethiopian eunuch, shalt go on thy way rejoicing when thou hast been obedient. Or is the promise made to those who bear a good report of the land? Remember who Caleb and Joshua were, the only two who obtained the promise out of all the host that came out of Egypt, because they alone, "faithful among the faithless found" honoured God, and would not dare to distrust him. So do thou honour God. Let a scoffing world hear thine unvarying testimony that thy God is good and true. Let not thy wretched face whisper to men that thou hast a hard master. Let not thy groanings and thy murmurings make young men suspect that God is tyrannical to his own children, and that they have no joys, no comforts, no delights. Be not as the hypocrites are, of a sad countenance; bow not thy head like a bulrush, afflict not thy soul, for this is not the service which God demandeth of thee. Better the palm branch than the willow, fairer the wedding garment than the mourner's weeds. He whom we serve is no Egyptian taskmaster, his yoke is easy, his service pleasure, his reward unspeakable. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." Be not cast down and troubled, as though the child of God had a cruel parent, and a miserable home; but lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh, and to the timbrel and the harp, march

ye on to the promised inheritance of the people of God. So shall you by joy of heart, not bringing up an evil report of the land, inherit the promise.

4. But, fourthly, another rule. Some of the promises thou wilt not inherit even so, unless thou shalt *imitate the men who by faith and patience inherit the promise.* Good old Spurstow says some of the promises are like the almond tree, they blossom hastily ere in the very earliest spring; but saith he, there are some that are like the mulberry tree, they are very slow in putting forth their leaves. Then what is a man to do if he has a mulberry-tree promise that will not put forth its leaves. Why he is to wait till it does. If the vision tarry, wait for it till it come, it will not tarry, the appointed time shall surely bring it. But some men, because God heareth not their prayers to-day, turn like silly children and cannot think that their Father is true. Oh, be ye men and add to your faith patience. Wait for his coming as the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, knowing that there is a time for every purpose under heaven; and while it is always your time to sow, wait till God appoints the time to reap. It is yours now to pray, he shall give you your time to dance when you shall rejoice because the promise has been fulfilled.

5. In the next place take care if you would get the promise that you *select some one that is suitable to your own case.* Being much troubled in heart upon one occasion there was one promise which came home to me. It was this—"His soul shall dwell at ease," and in the strength of that promise my soul learned to dwell at ease in the midst of reviling and misrepresentation and persecutions multiplied. You may find a choice word which will meet your condition, that will just suit you. Have you had five troubles, six, and seven? What say you to this: "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." Have you two troubles at once, both of them enough to overwhelm you? Ye have it here, "When thou goest through the fires thou shalt not be burned." That is one trouble warded off. "When thou goest through rivers they shall not overflow thee." Here is another trouble subdued. There are two at once, fire and water—one to burn and the other to drown. "I will be with thee," saith he, and that word meets both. Is it sickness: "I will make all thy bed in thy sickness." Is it failure in business, crops, harvest and the like? "At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh." Or is it death? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Get a hold of just that promise which is suitable to your case. You say, is there one? Why, would you have a list of blessings, you have them here in the catalogue of promises: promises of peace, honour, success, plenty; promises of preservation from trouble, support under it, deliverance out of it; promises in sickness, child-bearing, old age, famine, want, war, slander, reproach; promises to the stranger, the exile, the poor, the helpless, the fatherless, the widow, the prisoner, the captive, the dying; promises of justification, pardon of sin, adoption, union and communion with the Church, access to God, promises of wisdom, knowledge, divine teaching; promises beyond mention—promises of every grace and of every blessing—we cannot pause to mention them all. The fiery sword at the gate of the garden turned every way to keep men

out of Paradise. Oh, blessed be God, this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, turns every way to keep our enemies from breaking our peace. There are very few medicines which will heal all things; in fact, none. But we may say, there is a promise in the Scripture for every disease; no matter what it may be there is one meant expressly for that case; and if there should be a person who is the only man in the world who ever had a certain trouble, still he will find a promise exactly to fit his case, for this inspired book is an universal medicine. Here, O sick souls are all kinds of remedies, and it is not possible that human need should be wider than the divine supply. Still, brethren, get the one promise that suits you, and that one will be more useful to you than all the rest. Ahab had a great garden, he put Naboth's into it, he had large vineyards, and corn fields, and orchards, and subject-kings and tributaries; but Ahab suffered famine. There was a poor woman, she had nothing, only a little cruse, that was all; no fields, no orchards, no granaries; that one little cruse, however, was inexhaustible, and she knew no lack. Ah, blessed be God, and there be times with the child of God when everything else is gone, he has only one little cruse, one promise left, and that an inexhaustible one; and he and his house shall live upon it, he shall go in the strength of it all the days that the famine shall last. It is not having many promises; it is appropriating one, and pleading it before God, that shall make us mighty.

6. Again, young believer, would you obtain the promise? Then *be careful that you are thankful for promises you have already obtained.* We must thank God for the mercies we have, or else we shall not have others. In the early days when the Puritans settled in New England they were always having fast days. They had a fast day because their bread was getting short; another fast day because the Red Indians invaded them; another fast day because a ship had not arrived that they expected; and they had so many fast days that they began to get exceedingly weak. At length, one very wise brother said, "Did they not think it would be as well, now and then, to vary the thing, and to have a feast day occasionally? Would it not be quite as acceptable to God if instead of mourning over mercies they wanted, they were to thank him for mercies enjoyed?" So they instituted what is called the thanksgiving day, which became a perpetual ordinance afterwards—the thanksgiving for mercies received. Brethren, there is reason and wisdom in such a course. How dare you go and ask for anything else till you have been thankful for what you have? What do you with poor people who depend upon you? You gave the man some relief yesterday, and he walked away with an ungrateful face, shrugging shoulders, as much as to say, "That's all!" Sometimes when you have given charity to a very greedy person, have you not seen him stand and look at it? What has been your rule when he comes next time? You have sent him away empty, and very properly is he punished. But how is it the Lord does not serve you the same? You ask him for a mercy and you get it, and you either look at it as though it were not worth having, or else you enjoy it for a time, and then forget you have ever had it, and never think of thanking him; and then you knock at his door again, and expect that he will wait upon your lusts when you will not wait upon his throne with thanks-

giving. Oh! let us be thankful for the blessings we have, and then we shall attain grace to win the promise we have not. There is a young man up there who had a little light yesterday; he had been in the darkness before; thank God for the first gleam, young man, and you shall have the full daylight soon. There is a young woman there who has been bowed down with a great weight of sin, but her conscience is somewhat at peace; she hopes she has a little faith in the Lord. Oh! bless God for that little faith, and thou shalt find it grow; but if thou wilt not thank him, it may be for many a day thou shalt walk in darkness, and see no light till thou shalt come to value God's mercies at their proper rate.

7. And lastly, and not to keep you longer, if you would have your faith stirred up, *look at the examples of all who in olden times, and in our own times, by faith have obtained the promise.* Sinner, look thou at the many now in heaven who had no more to trust to than thou hast—the naked promise of God. God says to them as he does to thee, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." They trusted Christ and they are saved. Do thou the same and thou shalt find him true.

"I ask them whence their victory came,
They with united breath,
Ascribe their conquests to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death."

And you! saints of God, look to your noble ancestors. What a pedigree is yours! Through what a host of martyrs, confessors, prophets, and apostles has our blood descended, and all these bear their testimony that not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised. Among them all there is no exception; not one of them will impugn the veracity of God. They tried him on the rack, in the gloomy dungeon, and at the stake. They tried him in the Roman amphitheatre, when their bones were cracking between the jaws of lions. They tried him in Nero's garden, when the pitch smeared on them was flaming up, an awful sacrifice to God. They tried him when then they lay in mouldy dungeons rotting, or burning with fever. They tried him in the tracks of the wild goats, when they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented. They tried him in the bitterness of life, and in the agonies of death, and they all say to you—"Trust in the Lord; believe in him, so shall he bring it to pass, and you shall attain the promise. Falter not, hesitate not: waver not, but with the unstaggering faith of Abraham, say, 'He that hath promised is able also to perform,' and thou shalt see it with thine eyes and thou shalt eat thereof. Thou shalt have his presence and blessing in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting." God help us so to do for Jesu's sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SERMON FOR SPRING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 23RD, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."—

Solomon's Song, ii. 10—13.

THE things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of grace. God's truths are the apples of gold, and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver. The very seasons of the year find their parallel in the little world of man within. We have our winter—dreary howling winter,—when the north wind of the law rusheth forth against us, when every hope is nipped, when all the seeds of joy lie buried beneath the dark clods of despair, when our soul is fast fettered like a river bound with ice, without waves of joy, or flowings of thanksgiving. Thanks be unto God, the soft south wind breathes upon our soul, and at once the waters of desire are set free, the spring of love cometh on, flowers of hope appear in our hearts, the trees of faith put forth their young shoots, the time of the singing of birds cometh in our hearts, and we have joy and peace in believing through the Lord Jesus Christ. That happy springtide is followed in the believer by a rich summer, when his graces, like fragrant flowers, are in full bloom, loading the air with perfume; and fruits of the Spirit like citrons and pomegranates swell into their full proportion in the genial warmth of the Sun of Righteousness. Then cometh the believer's autumn, when his fruits grow ripe, and his fields are ready for the harvest; the time has come when his Lord shall gather together his "pleasant fruits," and store them in heaven; the feast of ingathering is at hand—the time when the year shall begin anew, an unchanging year, like the years of the right hand of the Most High in heaven. Now, beloved, each particular season has its duty. The husbandman finds that there is a time to plough, a time to sow, a time to reap; there is a season for vintage, and a period for the pruning of the vine; there is a month for the planting of herbs, and for the ingathering of seeds. To everything there is a time and a

purpose, and every season has its special labour. It seems from the text, that whenever it is springtide in our hearts, then Christ's voice may be heard saying, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Whenever we have been delivered from a dreary winter of temptation or affliction, or tribulation,—whenever the fair spring of hope cometh upon us, and our joys begin to multiply, then we should hear the Master bidding us seek after something higher and better, and we should go forth in his strength to love him more, and serve him more diligently than aforetime. This I take to be the truth taught in the text, and it shall be the subject of this morning's discourse; and to any with whom the time of the singing of birds is come, in whom the flowers appear—to any such I hope the Master may speak till their souls shall say, "*My* beloved spake, and said unto *me*, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." I shall have to use the general principle in illustration of four or five different cases.

I. First, with regard to THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST.

In looking upon her history, with half an eye you can plainly perceive that she has had her ebbs and flows. Often it seemed as if her tide retired; ungodliness, heresy, error, prevailed: but she has had her flood tide when once again the glorious waves have rolled in, covering with their triumphant righteousness the sands of ignorance and evil. The history of Christ's Church is a varied year of many seasons. She has had her high and noble processions of victory; she has had her sorrowful congregations of mourners during times of disaster and apparent defeat. Commencing with the life of Christ, what a smiling spring it was for the world when the Holy Spirit was poured out in *Pentecost*. Then might the saints sing with sweet accord—

> "The Jewish wintry state is gone,
> The mists are fled, the spring comes on;
> The sacred turtle dove we hear,
> Proclaim the new, the joyful year;
> The immortal vine of heavenly root,
> Blossoms and buds and gives her fruit;
> Lo, we are come to taste the wine,
> Our souls rejoice and bless the vine."

The winter was over and past—that long season in which the Jewish state lay dead, when the frosts of Phariseeism had bound up all spiritual life. The rain was over and gone, the black clouds of wrath had emptied themselves upon the Saviour's head; thunder and tempest and storm, all dark and terrible things were gone for ever. The flowers appeared on the earth; three thousand in one day blossomed forth, baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fair promises created for beauty and delight sprang up and with their blest fulfilment clothed the earth in a royal garment of many colours. The time of the singing birds was come, for they praised God day and night, eating their bread with joy and singleness of heart. The voice of the turtle was heard, for the Spirit—that hallowed dove from heaven—descended with tongues of fire upon the apostles, and the Gospel was preached in every land. Then had earth one of her joyous Sabbaths; the fig tree put forth her green figs; in every land there were some converts; the dwellers in

Mesopotamia, Medes, Parthians, Elamites—some of all—had been converted to God, and the tender grapes of new born piety and zeal gave forth a sweet smell before God. Then it was that Christ spake in words which made the heart of his Church to burn like coals of juniper:—

> "My Fellow-friende, my Beautiful,
> Arise and come thy way."

The bride arose, charmed by the heavenly voice of her spouse, she put on her beautiful garments and for some hundred years or more, she did come away; she came away from her narrowness of spirit, and she preached to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: she came away from her attachment to the State, and she dared to confess that Christ's kingdom was not of this world: she came away from her earthly hopes and comforts, for "they counted not their lives dear unto them that they might win Christ and be found in him:" she came away from all ease and rest of body, for they laboured more and more abundantly, making themselves sacrifices for Christ. Her apostles sailed on every shore; her confessors were found among people of every tongue; her martyrs kindled a light in the midst of lands afflicted with the midnight of heathen darkness. No place trodden by foot of man was left unvisited by the heralds of God, the heroic sons of the Church. "Go ye forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," was ringing in their ears like a clarion sounding the war charge, and they obeyed it like soldiers who had been men of war from their youth. Those were brave days of old when with a word the saints of God could overcome a thousand foes, that word the faithful promise of a gracious God. Alas, alas, that season passed away, the Church grew dull and sleepy; she left her Lord, she turned aside, she leaned upon an arm of flesh, courting the endowments of earthly kingdoms, then there came a long and dreary winter, the dark ages of the world, the darker ages of the Church. At last the time of love returned, when God again visited his people and raised up for them new apostles, new martyrs, new confessors. Switzerland and France, and Germany, and Bohemia, and the Low Countries, and England and Scotland had all their men of God, who spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The time of Luther and Calvin, and Melancthon, and of Knox was come—heaven's sunny days when once again the frost should give way to approaching summer. Then it was that men could say once again, "The winter is passed," priestcraft has lost its power, the rain is over and gone; false doctrines shall no more be as tempests to the Church; the flowers appear on the earth—little Churches; plants of God's right hand planting, are springing up everywhere.

The time of the singing of birds was come; Luther's hymns were sung by ploughmen in every field; the Psalms translated were scattered among all people—carried on the wings of angels, and the Church sang aloud unto God, her strength, and entered into his courts with the voice of thanksgiving, in such sort as she had not hoped for during her long and weary winter's night. In every cottage and under every roof tree, from the peasant's hut to the prince's palace, the singing of birds was come. Then peace came to the people and joy in the Lord, for the voice of the turtle was heard delighting hill and valley, grove and field,

with the love-notes of gospel grace. Then fruits of righteousness were brought forth, the Church was "an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits," camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices; and a sweet savour of faith and love went up to heaven, and God rejoiced therein. Then the Master sweetly cried—

> "Rise up, my love, my fair one; come away,
> Soar on the wings of thy victorious faith
> Above the realms of darkness and of sin!"

But she did not hear the voice, or she heard it but partially. Satan and his wiles prevailed; the little foxes spoiled the vines and devoured the tender grapes. Corruption, like a strong man armed, held the spouse, and she came not forth at her beloved's call. In England she would not come away; she hugged the arm of flesh; she laid hold upon the protection of the State; she would not venture upon the bare promise of her Lord. O that she had left dignities and endowments and laws to worldly corporations, and had rested on her Husband's love alone. Alas for our divisions at this time, what are they but the bitter result of the departure of our fathers from the chastity of simple dependance such as Jesus' loves? In other lands she confined herself too much within her own limits, sent forth few missionaries, laboured not for the conversion of the outcasts of Israel; she would not come away, and so the reformation never took place. It commenced but it ceased, and the Churches, many of them, remain to this day half reformed, in a transition state, somewhere between truth and error, like the Lutheran Church and the Established Church of England at the present day—too good to be rejected, too evil to be wholly received, having such a savour of godliness therein that they are Christ's, but having such a mixture of Popery therein that their garments are not clean. Oh! would to God that the Church could *then* have heard her Master's voice, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away."

And now, brethren, in these days we have had another season of refreshing. God has been pleased to pour out his Spirit upon men again. Perhaps the late revivals have almost rivalled Pentecost—certainly in the number of souls ingathered, they may bear rigid comparison with that feast of firstfruits. I suppose that in the north of Ireland, in Wales, in America, and in many parts of our own country, there have been wrought more conversions than took place at the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's people are alive and in earnest, and all our agencies are quickened with new energy. The time of the singing of birds is come, though there are some harsh croaking ravens still left. The flowers do appear on the earth though much unmelted snow still covers the pastures. Thank God, the winter is over and passed to a great extent, though there are some pulpits and churches as frost-bound as ever. We thank God that the rain is over and gone, though there are still some who laugh at the people of God and would destroy all true doctrine. We live in happier days than those which have passed. We may speak of these times as the good old times wherein time is older than ever it was, and, I think, better

than it has been for many a day. And what now? Why, Jesus says, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." To each denomination of his Church he sends this message, "Come away." He seems to speak to Episcopacy and say, "Come away; cut out of the liturgy that which is not according to my mind, leave the State, be free." He speaks to the Calvinist, and says, "Come away: be no more dead and cold as thou hast been; let not thy sons hold the truth in unrighteousness." He speaks to each denomination according to its need, but to the same import, "Rise up and come away; leave deadness and coldness and wrong-doing and hardness and harshness, and bitterness of spirit; leave idleness and slothfulness and lukewarmness; rise up and come away. Come away to preach the Gospel amongst the heathen; come away to reform the masses of this wicked city; come away from your faithlessness; from your coldness of spirit, come away: the land is before you; go up and possess it." Come away, your Master waits to call you: strike! he will strike with you; build! he will be the great master builder: plough! he himself shall break the clods; arise and thresh the mountains, for he shall make you a sharp threshing instrument having teeth, and the mountains shall be beaten small until the wind shall scatter them like chaff, and you shall rejoice in the Lord. Rise up, people of God, in this season of revival, and come away! "Why sleep ye? arise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

II. Methinks the text has a very SPECIAL VOICE TO US AS A CHURCH. We must use the Scripture widely, but yet personally. While we know its reference to the universal Church, we must not forget its special application to ourselves. We, too, have had a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The day was with this Church in the olden times when we were minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow; when we could not meet more than twenty in a place, and sometimes not more than five, without fine and persecution. Then the Church had its elders, who could meet the few in private houses,—and cheer their hearts, bidding them abide in patience, waiting till better times might come. Then God sent them a pastor after his own heart, Benjamin Rider, who fed them with knowledge and understanding, and gathered together the scattered sheep during the times of peace. Then there followed him a man worthy to be pastor of this Church—one who had sat in the stocks at Aylesbury, had seen his books burned by the common hangman before his face, and who counted not even his life dear unto him that he might win Christ, that man was Benjamin Keach, the opener of the parables, and expositor of metaphors. On old Horselydown, then a great common, a large house was built where he preached the word, and his hearers were very many. The flowers then appeared on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds was come to this Church. He passed away and slept with his fathers, and was followed by Dr. Gill, the laborious commentator; and for some time during his sound and solid ministry it was a good and profitable season, and the Church was multiplied and built up. But again, even under his ministry the ranks were thinned, and the host grew small. There was doctrine in perfection, but more power from on high was needed. Then after a space of fifty years or more of

Dr. Gill's ministry, God sent Dr. Rippon, and once more the flowers appeared upon the earth, and the Church multiplied exceedingly, bringing forth fruit unto God; and out of her there went many preachers who testified of the truth that was in Jesus and were the parents of Churches which still flourish. Then the good old man, full of years and of good works, was carried to his home: and there came others who taught the Church, and ingathered many souls, but they were not to the full extent successors of the men who went before them, for they tarried but a little season. Much good they did, but they were not such builders as those were who had gone before. Then came a time of utter deadness; the officers mourned; there was strife and division; they looked upon empty pews where once there had been full congregations; they looked about them to find one who might fill the place and bring together the scattered multitude; but they looked and looked in vain, and despondency and despair fell upon some hearts with regard to this Church; but the Lord had mercy on them, and in a very short space, through his providence and grace, the winter was passed, and the rain was over and gone. The time of singing of birds had come; there were multitudes to sing God's praises. The voice of the turtle was heard in our land; all was peace and unity, and affection and love. Then came the first ripe fruits. Many were added to the Church. Then the vines gave forth a sweet smell. Converts came, till we have often said, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" Often has this Church asked the question, "Who has begotten me these?" And now these eight years we have had a season, not of spasmodic revival, but of constant progress. A glad period of abundant increase in which there has been as many converts as we could receive, till every officer of the Church has had his hands full in seeing enquirers, and we have only had time to stop now and then and take breath, and say, "What hath God wrought?" The time came when we erected this house, because no other place was large enough for us; and still God continues with us, till our Church-meetings are not sufficient for the reception of converts; and we know not how large a proportion of this assembly are believers in Christ, because time fails to hear the cases of conversion. Well, what ought we to do? I hear the Master saying, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." I hear Jesu speaking to this Church, and saying, "Where much is given, there much shall be required." Serve not the Lord as other Churches, but yet more abundantly. As he has given you showers of love, so give him your fertile fields. Let us rejoice with thanksgiving; let this Church feel that she ought to be more dedicated to Christ than others; that her members should be more holy, loving, living nearer to God; that they should be more devoted, filled with more zeal, more fervency, doing more for Christ, praying more for sinners, labouring more for the conversion of the world; and let us be asking ourselves what can we do, as a Church, that shall be more than we have ever thought of doing: inasmuch as he feeds us with the bread of heaven, multiplies our numbers, keeps us in perfect concord and makes us a happy people; let us be a peculiar people, zealous for good works, showing forth his glory among the sons of men. It is a solemn

responsibility to rest on any man's mind to be the pastor of such a Church as this, numbering very nearly two thousand in Church fellowship. I suppose such a Baptist Church has never existed before. If we be found craven in this day of battle, woe unto us! If we be unfaithful to our charge and trust, woe unto us! If we sleep when we might do so much, surely will the Master say, "I will take the candlestick out of its place, and quench their light in darkness. Laodicea is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, I will spue her out of my mouth." And there shall come a dark day to us, with Ichabod on the fore-front of our house of prayer, and with darkness in our souls, and bitterness and remorse in our spirits, because we served not Christ while we might. I will cry aloud to you and spare not to admonish and encourage you, my brethren and comrades, in the conflict for truth. Men, brethren, and fathers; young men, maidens, and mothers in Israel, shall any of us draw back *now?* O Lord, after thou hast so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful and become indifferent towards thy good cause and work? Who knoweth but thou hast brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this? Oh! we beseech thee, send down thy holy fire on every heart, and the tongue of flame on every head, that every one of us may be missionaries for Christ, earnest teachers of the truth as it is in Jesus! I leave these thoughts with you. You can feel them better than I can express them; and I can better feel their might than I can make you feel it. O God! do thou teach us what our responsibility is, and give us grace that we may discharge our duty in thy sight.

III. WHEN THE TIME OF THE BRIDAL OF THE SOUL HAS ARRIVED TO EACH CONVINCED SINNER, THEN ALSO THERE ARE SPECIAL DUTIES.

Can you not remember, dearly beloved, that day of days, that best and brighest of hours, when first you saw the Lord, lost your burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on your way in peace? My soul can never forget that day. Dying, all but dead, diseased, pained, chained, scourged, bound in fetters of iron, in darkness and the shadow of death, Jesus appeared unto me. My eyes looked to him; the disease was healed, the pains removed, chains were snapped, prison doors were opened, darkness gave place to light. What delight filled my soul!—what mirth, what ecstacy, what sound of music and dancing, what soarings towards heaven, what height and depths of ineffable delight! Scarce since then have we known joys which surpassed the rapture of that first hour. Oh! do you not remember it, dear brethren, and was not it a spring time to you? The winter was passed. It had been so long, so dreary—those months of unanswered prayer, those nights of weeping, those days of watching. The rain was over and gone; the mutterings of Sinai's thunders were hushed; the flashings of its lightnings were no more perceived; God was beheld as reconciled unto you; the law threatened no vengeance, justice demanded no punishment. Then the flowers appeared in our heart; hope, love, peace, patience sprung up from the sod; the snow-drop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil lily of love, all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing birds was

come, all that is within us magnified the holy name of our forgiving God. Our soul's exclamation was,

"I will praise thee every day,
Now thine anger 's turned away;
Comfortable thoughts arise,
From the bleeding sacrifice.

Jesus is become at length,
My salvation and my strengh;
And his praises shall prolong,
While I live my pleasant song."

Every meal seemed now to be a sacrament; our clothes were vestments; the common utensils of our trade were "holiness to the Lord." We went out abroad into the world to see everywhere tokens for good. We went forth with joy and were led forth with praise; the mountains and the hills brake forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the fields did clap their hands. It was, indeed, a happy, a bright and a glorious season. Do I speak to some who are passing through that spring-tide now? Young convert, young believer, in the dawn of thy piety, Jesus says, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." He asks thee to come out from the world and make a profession of thy faith in him *now:* put it not off; it is the best time to profess thy faith whilst thou art young, while as yet to thee the days come not, nor the days draw nigh, when thou shalt say, "I have no pleasure in them." Make haste and delay not to keep his commandments. Arise, and be baptized. Come ye out from among the world, be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; follow Christ in this perverse generation, that you may hear him say at the last, "Of you I am not ashamed, for you were not ashamed of me in the day when I was despised and rejected of men." In this your early time, dedicate yourselves to God. If you do not draw up a form and subscribe it with your hand, yet draw it up in your heart and subscribe it with your soul—"Lord, I am thine—wholly thine: all I am, and all I have, I would devote to thee. Thou hast bought me with thy blood. Lord, take me into thy service: thou hast put away all thy wrath and given my spirit rest. Let me spend myself and be spent—in life and in death let me be consecrated to thee." Make no reserves. Come altogether away from selfishness—from aught which would divide youe chaste and pure love to Christ, your soul's husband. Rise up and come away. In this the beginning of your spiritual life, the young dawn of marvellous light, come away from your old habits; avoid the very appearance of evil; come away from old friendships which may tempt you back to the flesh pots of Egypt. Leave all these things. Come away to higher flights of spirituality than your fathers as yet have known. Come away to private communion. Be much alone in prayer. Come away: be diligent in the study of God's Word. Come away, shut the doors of your chamber, and talk with your Lord Jesus, and have close and intimate dealing with him. I know I speak to some young babes in grace, beginners in our Israel. Oh! take care that you begin aright by coming right away from the world, by

being strictly obedient to every divine command, by making your dedication perfect, complete, unreserved, sincere, spotless.

> "While from your newly-sprouted vines
> Whose grapes are young and tender, choice and rich,
> The flavour cometh forth.—Beloved one, rise!
> Rise from this visible engrossing scene,
> And with affections linked to things above,
> Where Christ, thy treasure is, be soaring still!"

IV. But in the next place our text deserves to be used in another light. It may be that you and I have had winters of dark trouble, succeeded by soft *springs of deliverance.*

We will not enlarge much on our sorrows, but some of us have been to the gates of death, and, as we thought then, into the very jaws of hell. We have had our Gethsemanes, when our souls have been exceeding sorrowful: nothing could comfort us, we were like the fool who abhorred all manner of meat; nothing came with any consolation to our aching hearts. At last the Comforter came to us, and all our troubles were dissipated. A new season came, the time of the singing of birds was once more in our hearts. We did not chatter any more like the swallow or the crane, but we began to sing like the nightingale, even with the thorn in our breast; we learned to mount to heaven like the lark, singing all the way. The great temporal affliction which had crushed us was suddenly removed, and the strong temptation of Satan was taken off from us. The deep depression of spirit which had threatened to drive us to insanity was on a sudden lifted off, and we became elastic in heart, and once again like David, danced before the ark, singing songs of deliverance. I address some who this morning are looking back to such seasons. You have just reached the realm of sunlight, and you can look back upon long leagues of shadow and cloud through which you have had to march; the valley of the shadow of death you have just traversed, you can well remember the horrible pit and the miry clay, and hark! we can hear still the rushing as of the wings and feet of crowded miseries, and still we can remember the terrible shadow of confusion; but we have come through it—through it all: the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, and we can rejoice now in covenant faithfulness, and renewed lovingkindness. Now, have we our assurance back again; and Christ is near to us, and we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Well, then, what are we to do? Why, the Master says to us, "Rise up, and come away." Now is the time when we should mount up to be nearer to himself. Now that the day dawns and the shadows flee away, let us seek our beloved amid the hills of spices, and by the lilies where he feeds. I would we had more in the Church,—more in this Church—like Madame Guyon, who loved the Lord as that woman did who had much forgiven, or like Mrs. Rowe, who in England was what Madame Guyon was in France; or like Mrs. Hawker, or like Samuel Rutherford, who could pant, and long, and sigh, for nearer fellowship with Christ. If there is ever a season when we ought to follow hard after the Lord, and not be content until we have embraced him, it is when we have come up from the wilderness, leaning

upon our Beloved. Then should the chaste virgins sing with joyous heart concerning him to whom they are espoused,—

> "What is this vain, this visionary scene
> Of mortal things to me? My thoughts aspire
> Beyond the narrow bounds of rolling spheres.
> The world is crucified and dead to me,
> And I am dead to all its empty shows.
> But, oh! *for thee* unbounded wishes warm
> My panting soul, and call forth all her powers.
> Whate'er can raise desire or give delight,
> Or with full joy replenish every wish,
> Is found *in thee*, thou infinite abyss of ecstasy and life!"

Each believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God, and longing to put his lip to the well-head of eternal life,—to follow the Saviour and say, "Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother, when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee." Oh! that the believer would never be content with having drops and sips of love, but long for the full feast. O my soul thirsteth to drink deep of that cup which never can be drained and to eat of all the dainties of that table which boundless love has furnished. I am persuaded that you and I are content to live on pence when we might live on pounds; that we eat dry crusts when we might taste the ambrosial meat of angels; that we are content to wear rags when we might put on kings' robes; that we go out with tears upon our faces when we might anoint them with fresh oil. Satisfied I am that many a believer lives in the cottage of doubt when he might live in the mansion of faith. We are poor starveling things when we might be fed; we are weak when we might be mighty, feeble when we might be as the giants before God, and all because we will not hear the Master say, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." Now, brethren, is the time with you after your season of trouble, to renew your dedication vow to God. Now, beloved, you should rise up from worldliness and come away—from sloth, from the love of this world, from unbelief. What enchants you to make you sit still where you are? What delights you to make you as you now are? Come away! There is a higher life; there are better things to live for, and better ways of seeking them. Aspire! Let thy high ambition be unsatisfied with what thou hast already learned and known; not as though thou hadst already attained, either wert already perfect; this one thing do thou—press forward to the things that are before. Rise, thou soul, greatly beloved, and enter into thy Master's rest. I cannot get my words this morning as I would have them; but if these lips had language I would seek

by every motive of gratitude for the mercies you are enjoying, by every sensation of thankfulness which your heart can experience for grace received, to make you now say, "Jesus, I give up myself to thee this day, to be filled with thy love; and I renounce all other desire but the desire to be used in thy service, that I may glorify thee." Then, methinks, there may go out of this place this morning many young men and old men too, many youths and maidens, determined to be doing something for Christ. I well remember preaching a sermon one Sabbath morning which stirred up some brethren to the midnight meeting movement, and much good was done thereby. What if some new thought should pass through some newly quickened spirit, and you should think of some fresh invention for glorifying Christ at this good hour! Is there no Mary here who has an alabaster box at home unbroken yet? Will she not to-day break it over the Master's head? Is there no Zaccheus here who will to-day receive Christ into his house, constrained by love divine? Oh! by the darkness that has gone, and by the brightness that has come, live lovingly towards Christ. Oh! by the fears that have been hushed, by the pains that have been removed, by the joy you now experience, and by the delights which he has vouchsafed to you, I beseech you cling to him and seek to serve him. Go into the world to bring in his lost sheep, to look after his hidden ones, to restore to him that lost piece of money for which he has lit the candle and desires you to sweep the house. O Christian men and brethren, it is an angel's work I have attempted now, and mortal lips fail; but I conjure you if there be any bowels of mercy, if there be any consolation in Christ Jesus, "if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Lay not up your treasure upon earth, where thieves break through and steal; but lay up your treasure in heaven: for where your treasure is there shall your heart be also. If you love my Master, serve him: if you do not, if you owe him nothing, oh, if you owe him nothing, and have had no favour from him, then I conjure you to seek mercy; but if you have found it; if ye do know it, oh, for his love's sake love *him!* This dying world needs your help; this wicked sinful world needs your aid. Up, and be doing! The battle is raging furiously. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! Guards, up and at them! Do you sleep, sirs—sleep when now the shots are flying thick as hail, and the foemen are rallying for the last charge in the world's mighty Armageddon? Up! for the defiant standard of hell waves proudly in the breeze. Do you say you are feeble? He is your strength. Do you say you are few? It is not by many nor by few that God worketh. Dost thou say, "I am obscure?" God wanteth not the notoriety and fame of men. Up, men, women, and children in Christ! Up! be no more at ease in Zion, but serve God while it is called to-day, for the war needs every hand, and the conflict calls for every heart, and night cometh when no man can fight or work.

V. And now, last of all, the time is coming to us all, when we shall lie upon our dying beds. Oh, long-expected day, hasten and come! The best thing a Christian can do is to die and be with Christ which is far better. Well, when we shall lie upon our beds panting out our

life we shall remember that then the winter is past for ever. No more now of this world's trials and troubles. "The rain is over and gone;" no more stormy doubts, no more dark days of affliction. "The flowers appear on the earth." Christ is giving to the dying saint some of the foretastes of heaven; the angels are throwing over the walls some of the flowers of Paradise. We have come to the land Beulah, we sit down in beds of spices, and can almost see the celestial city on the hill tops, on the other side of the narrow stream of death. "The time of the singing of the birds is come;" angelic songs are heard in the sick-chamber. The heart sings too, and midnight melodies cheer the quiet entrance of the grave. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Those are sweet birds which sing in the groves by the side of the river Jordan. Now it is that "the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;" calm, peaceful, and quiet, the soul rests in the consciousness that there is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus. Now does "the fig tree put forth her green figs;" the first fruits of heaven are plucked and eaten while we are on earth. Now do the very vines of heaven give forth a smell that can be perceived by love. Look forward to your death, ye that are believers in Christ, with great joy. Expect it as your spring tide of life, the time when your real summer shall come, and your winter shall be over for ever.

"One distant glimpse my eager passion fires!
Jesus! to thee my longing soul aspires!
When shall I hear thy voice divinely say,
'Rise up my love, my fair one come away.
Come meet thy Saviour bright and glorious
O'er sin and death and hell victorious.'"

May God grant that the people who fear his name may be stirred up this morning, if not by my words, yet by the words of my text, and by the influences of God's Spirit, and may you who have never had sweet seasons from the presence of God, seek Christ and he will be found of you, and may we all meet in the land where winters of sin and sorrow shall be all unknown.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SIGHT OF SELF.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 2ND, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."—Isaiah lxiv. 6, 7, 8.

It is easy to commit sin, but hard to confess it. Man will transgress without a tempter; but even when urged by the most earnest pleader, he will not acknowledge his guilt. If we could but bring men into such a state of heart that they felt themselves to be guilty, there would be hope for them; but this is one of the most hopeless signs concerning our race, that it is so hardened and so perverse, that even when sin stares it in the face, it still pleads innocence, and proudly lifts up its head and challenges the accuser. Transgressors always seek to escape from the painful and humiliating duty of acknowledging their offences. Some seek to hide it both from themselves and others, silencing their own conscience, and throwing dust in the eyes of their companions; like Achan, digging in the earth to hide the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold, they forget that their sin will surely find them out. As the foolish ostrich, when pursued by the hunters, buries its head in the sand, and when it cannot see its enemy, thinks it has escaped; so these men take the fact that they are undiscovered by men, and are at peace with themselves, as a good omen, whereas it is a sad sign of hardness and blindness of heart. Many pursue another course, and make excuses for their offences. They did do wrong, it is true, but then there is much to be said in extenuation; like Aaron, they urge the clamours of the people, or they will have it that even Providence itself compelled them to sin. "I cast gold into the fire, and there came out this calf," as if sin were an accident, and not a wilful wickedness; as if disobedience to God were a part of necessity of nature, and not a direct rebellion of the will against the Majesty of heaven. Others, too, will throw their sin on their fellows—a trick which they learned of our first parents, for Adam, in the garden, said—"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat;" or they may have learned it of our mother

Eve, for even she understood this stratagem—"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." So they will have it that they were dragged into sin by force; that they were over-persuaded or craftily enticed, so that they ought not to be considered as accomplices in the crime—that they are, in fact, only the instruments of others' sins, and could hardly resist, so that others must take the whole of the guilt, and they themselves go scot free. Some who have attained to a higher pitch of brazen impudence, will actually deny altogether that they have sinned; will come before God's servant as Ananias did before Peter, and say, "Yea, for so much," while yet they are holding a lie in their right hand. We have some who will stoutly say, "We have not sinned," and who think themselves insulted if in plain terms you accuse them of having violated the law of God. There are some also, and those not a few, who endeavour to colour their sins, and to cloak them with a profession of godliness, by attending to the ceremonies of religion with ostentatious carefulness. Like the Pharisees of old, they devour widows' houses, but they make long prayers. They hate Christ in their hearts, but they tithe mint, and anise, and cummin; they violate the precepts of the law, but they bind it on their foreheads, wear long fringes on their garments, and write texts of Scripture on the door-posts of their houses. These serve at the altar of the devil, in the garb of God's priests, and offer unclean flesh upon the high places, in pretended honour of the God of Israel. We know that all these classes abound everywhere, for a man will do anything to hide sin from himself; and he will give skin for skin, yea, all that he hath that he may be self-justified, that he may have somewhat to answer when he stands before the Most High, that he may find food for his pride, and a coverlet for the infamous arrogance of his heart. He will dig, and labour, and strive, give his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned, that he may win a righteousness of his own. Beloved, if you and I have ever been partakers of the grace of God, we have been brought to the distasteful duty of confession of sin, for it is not possible that we have been pardoned if we have refused to acknowledge our guilt. We cannot be partakers of the life of God in the soul if still we can say, "Lord, I am righteous, and of myself I can plead exemption from thy curse." A clear sense of our lost estate is absolutely necessary to make us even seek for pardon. As the man who thinks himself in good health will never send for a physician, as the man who is sufficiently warm will not avail himself of an extra garment which is proffered to him, as the man who is not hungry will not accept an invitation to a feast of charity, so we find that none will come to Christ but those who feel that they must come, and that out of him they are utterly lost, ruined, and undone. Moreover, as none will seek the mercy till they know their need, so we may rest assured that none would value that mercy even if it were given to them before their spiritual poverty had become manifest. What is medicine to the healthy man? Send it to his door, and what thanks will you receive? You have been guilty of an impertinence. Why offer charity to the man who is rich and increased in goods? Will he receive your dole? Will he not turn up his heel and tell you to find out the beggar in the street, but not to mistake him for one who needs your alms? Even, I say, should God

give salvation to those who feel no need of it, they would not value the priceless boon. This diamond of God would be to them but a piece of valueless broken glass; this gem from heaven but as a pebble from the brook.

"What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so."

It is certain that God will never give pardon to those who do not confess their need of it, for it is not consistent with the sovereignty and dignity of God that he should present pardon to the man who will not first honour God's law by pleading that he is guilty. If a man shall still say, "I have not broken the law," is God unmerciful if he refuse to forgive him? Dost thou harden thy brow like iron, and thy heart as adamant, and wilt thou accuse God of want of love, if he say, "I will send no mercy to that man, neither shall he find pardon at my hands, 'but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word?'" Is it any wonder, I ask you, that he should pass by the proud and the self-righteous and leave them unblest? By their own profession they do not want his mercy; they declare they do not need to be forgiven. Then perish! Perish! for ye righteously deserve it. Go down to the hell which ye have chosen by your pride, and reap the fruits of your own wilfulness, but impugn not the tenderness of God, if he adhere to this inviolable rule, that if we will not confess our sins we shall perish in our guilt;

"For Christ as soon would abdicate his own,
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne."

This morning it is my intention, as God shall help me, *to describe that view which every gracious soul is sure to have of himself;* then, secondly, *to warn you of certain dangers to which those are exposed who only know their need, but who have not yet found Christ;* and I hope to close with *the pleas*—some of which are in the text, some to be found elsewhere—*which every soul that is conscious of guilt may urge before the throne of mercy.*

I. First, then, I HAVE TO DESCRIBE THE VIEW WHICH EVERY TRULY GRACIOUS SOUL WILL TAKE OF HIMSELF, and as I describe it, I hope there are some here who will say, "That is what I think of myself, that is my condition before God." Though you should think yours to be a hopeless case, yet I pray you rest assured that it is not so, if you can join in the confession through which I am now about briefly to pass. I feel persuaded that it is the Spirit of God which has brought you to a deep sense of your lost estate, and has thus begun a good work in your soul.

1. *Every gracious soul who is truly enlightened by the Spirit, has a clear sense of the root of all his guiltiness.* He knows the plague of his own heart, and cries with the text, "We are all as an unclean thing." He discovers that not merely his outward acts, but that his very person is essentially sinful in the sight of God. He was willing to confess once

that the streams were black, but now he perceives to his horror that the fountain itself is defiled. You could have made him aforetime confess that the fruits of his boughs were bitter, but now he perceives that the root is corrupt, the tree is evil, the very sap is poisonous. He is brought to feel now that sinfulness lieth in the very marrow of his bones and is inherent in his blood; that he himself—as well as his thoughts and his acts—he himself is "as an unclean thing." The metaphor that is here used is hardly understood by us, because it is drawn from the levitical and ceremonial use of the word "unclean." Under the Jewish law you know that when a person was unclean he could not go up to the house of the Lord. He could offer no sacrifice; God could accept nothing at his hands; he was an outcast and an alien so long as he remained unclean. If he sat upon a bed it must be washed with water; if he touched a vessel of earth it must be broken, for it was unclean; if he ate any food, the whole of that food was unclean, and no clean person might venture to touch it. When this uncleanness was connected with disease, as in the case of leprosy, the man became loathsome—so utterly loathsome to himself that it must have been a horror to have lived; so loathsome to his fellow creatures that his only appropriate spot was Solitude, where alone, far from any water brook of which human lip might drink, alone so that the air might not be contaminated with his disease, alone he lived and cried, "Unclean! unclean! unclean!" Every gracious soul knows itself to be by nature as an unclean thing. He feels that of himself he cannot worship God acceptably; that he cannot stand within the veil on his own merits; that he can bring no sacrifice which God can accept; that he is the means of injury to others; that his ill example leads others astray; and that, in fact, he is not fit to stand in the congregation of the righteous, nor to be numbered with God's chosen, for he is in himself polluted and polluting. When a sense of his horrible depravity and degredation is heavy upon him, before he has found Christ, that man will slink into the house of God like a felon, and hide himself away; or, if he sits down with God's people, it is with the idea that he is out of place like a filthy beggar in a palace, or a loathsome reptile in a hallowed temple. Often he feels, when a Christian speaks to him, as if he were not fit to give an answer; he feels himself to be in person, utterly unfit to live. Ah, well do I remember the period when first I discovered this truth; and how did I wish, as John Bunyan did, that I had been anything but a man,—a toad, or a serpent, sooner than have been a man, a creature that had offended its own Maker, a creature in itself so prone to go astray, so sure to sin if left alone. In "Grace Abounding," Bunyan says, "My original and inward pollution, that, *that* was my plague and affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me; that I had the guilt of, to amazement; by reason of that, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad; and I thought I was so in God's eyes too; sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had; I could have changed heart with anybody; I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness,

deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace." Oh, there was no talk of human dignity then! There are still some few of your fine preachers who will have it that there is a deal of dignity in human nature—that man is a noble creature. Alas! brethren, he that talks about the dignity of nature, and the nobility of fallen man, does not know himself. So far from being fit for the pulpit, he ought to begin to learn his catechism. He cannot speak of a state of grace, for he has not yet learned aright his own state by nature! He must be a blind leader of the blind who can talk like this; he does not know the first work of the Spirit in his own soul, or else he would feel that we are just the reverse of anything that is noble or good, for "we are all as an unclean thing." The whole man is vile and desperately evil, there is not one sound spot left within or without. The sin is white on our very forehead, but its core lies deep within; the heart is deceitful; the passions are corrupt; the understanding is eaten through and through with a deadly leprosy; and in us, that is, in our own flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

"Lord, when thy spirit deigns to show
The badness of our hearts,
Astonished at the amazing view,
The soul with horror starts.

The dungeon op'ning, foul as hell,
Its loathsome stench emits;
And, brooding in each secret cell,
Some hideous monster sits.

Swarms of ill thoughts their bane diffuse,
Proud, envious, false, unclean;
And ev'ry ransack'd corner shows
Some unsuspected sin."

2. But in the second place, the spiritually enlightened man—and we insist upon it that none else are spiritually enlightened—*the spiritually enlightened man then perceives that all his actions are evil.* "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Our *righteousnesses;* it does not say our *un*righteousnesses. Brethren, if our righteousnesses are so bad, what must our *un*righteousnesses be? Our "righteousnesses," that is our prayers, our tears, our good deeds, those things whereof we once gloried, when we are really taught of God we perceive that these are filthy rags. The expression, "filthy rags," in the Hebrew, is one which we could not with propriety explain in the present assembly. As the confession must be made privately and alone before God, so the full meaning of the comparison is not meant for human ear. Suffice it to say that rags which have bound up a foul, putrid, running sore, are understood by some commentators, and our righteousnesses are comparable to such rags as these. Oh tell me not that we exaggerate when we describe the fall of man! O sirs! say not that we love to depreciate our race, and that we slander that noble creature, man. All those things which you call exaggerations fall below the mark—even below the mark of what some of us have felt concerning ourselves, and that is very far from what God knows of our state. Sirs, there is sin in our

prayers; they need to be prayed over again. There is filth in the very tears that we shed in penitence; there is sin in our very holiness; there is unbelief in our faith; there is hatred in our very love; there is the slime of the serpent upon the fairest flower of our garden. I know time was, in looking back upon my past life—and it had been moral and without exception to the eyes of others—yet I loathed myself that ever I should have lived such an unworthy life; and indeed at the present I can do but little otherwise, for "in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." I am sure when the soul is convinced of sin it will look upon self-righteousness as the most detestable lie that ever was forged by hell, and it will regard all self-confidence as the most frightful delusion and deception into which the soul can fall. Trust in our doings, brethren?—we have no doings to trust to. If our best works are bad, and so bad that they are as filthy rags, what must our bad works be? Oh, I would have some of you remember your bad works this morning that you may repent of them. You remember how the apostle speaks of "fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards," and he says, "such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." There is no wisdom in daintily handling men's sins. There are vices in London as much as in Corinth, and we have in our churches those who once indulged in them; and in this congregation this morning we may have some who live in them still. O God, show them their sin; let them feel their guilt before thee; and let us all, as we shall do, if the spirit of God be in our hearts, confess that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

3. In the next place, the enlightened heart into which the candle of the Lord hath shone, *is led to see the failure and futility of all its resolutions to be better.* "We all do fade as a leaf." Some of you have been lately awakened, you have felt yourselves to be lost souls; and what have you been doing? Why, you have promised to be better, and you have tried to be; you have mended in various ways, or, rather, you have proposed to yourselves to amend. Perhaps you made up your mind that you would never go out to your labour again without prayer—that you would never lose your temper—that when tempted to indulge your passions you would restrain them—that those things which had been your besetting sins should now be given up. What progress have you made with your resolution? Are you not to-day like the man who resolved and re-resolved, but remained the same? Truly in our own strength, we all do fade as a leaf. We look fair and green in the morning when we rise from our beds, fresh with midnight vows and repentings, but before night we are as faded and withered as the dry sere leaf withered with autumnal blasts. We went forth, saying, "To-day I shall stand: this time I shall not fall: now I am safe: I have made up my mind: I am resolved: I know there is a something in me which can improve, I can be better if I like: I will reform: I will stand up and make myself a Christian." But what became of it all? Down it went, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not a wreck behind." You returned "like a dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." How many slips men make before they learn to put themselves into God's arms to be carried by him! It seems as if we

must try fifty times before we will learn that simple truth,—"Without me ye can do nothing." We run about over the treacherous sea beach looking out a spot of sand just a little harder than the last; and we compliment ourselves that we have hit upon a much more solid site for our new and noble house. "Ah! that was a mistake last time: that was a poor bit of sand to build on: this time it is all right. See how hard it is! the tide does not come here often: see it does not yield, it is like a bowling green, smooth and hard. I will build here." The timbers are laid, the goodly stones are squared, and the house uprises. But, hark! what is that? The breakers are coming up; the tide certainly does reach this very spot. It is a full spring tide that is now marching up the shore, and lo! the materials are engulfed in the all-devouring deep; our tower has tottered and great is the fall thereof. What will disappointed man do now, sirs? Why he will look out another bit of sand, and so he will go on unless the grace of God prevent; but when grace comes he will give up all the sand at once, and begin to build upon the rock, and upon the rock alone. I would have you reform as much as you can; but do not mix your reformation with religion, for you need regeneration, and reformation will not suffice. No touching up of the old house will suffice, down with it, down with it, for the very foundation is rotten. It is not mending your clothes; it is throwing them away, and wearing the new robes of righteousness that will fit you for the feasts of glory. We want no Gibeonitish "old shoes and clouted;" ye must have shoes of iron and brass, for those are the only ones that can carry you to heaven. Ye may scrub the negro; it is good even for negroes to be cleansed, but that is not the way to make him white. Ye may use your brush, and your nitre, and your soap; but if ye would enter heaven ye must go to God and ask him to make the Ethiopian anew, for none of these things can make him white before God. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: we all do fade as a leaf." Our best professions, hopes, resolutions, and pretensions—all of them fade like shadows, dreams, and fancies of the brain.

4. But the truly awakened soul knows a fourth thing, namely, that *he is not in himself able to stand against the invasions of temptation*, for the text has put it—"Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." There is a sere-leaf hanging alone on that tree; all its companions have long ago fallen and are gone. Sere-leaf, thou wilt not long hold thy place, for thou dependest for thy connexion with the tree upon a very slender thread. Hark! the north-wind howls; now shall all the trees be clear. Where is the sere-leaf now? Hurried away to join the rotting heap upon the ground. So, when men find that their vows wither, yet they will still hang to their hopes, and to their moralities; but some strong temptation comes unexpectedly upon them just at the moment when their mind is susceptible of its power, and where are they? The devil catches their tinder dry and then strikes the spark. He knows how to time his temptations; he does not assail his victims when they are ready to resist him, but waylays them in the dark corner of some cut-throat lane, and smites the unguarded passenger with a deadly blow. The thief never lets you know when he intends to break in, for "if the good man of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he

would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." The temptation comes like a howling north wind at an unexpected moment, and where is your man now? Unable to resist, carried away by the very vice which he thought he had renounced. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Every Christian man here knows this. He knows that the grace of God is stronger than all the winds of temptation, but he knows also that apart from that, he can no more resist sin than the chaff from the hand of the winnower can stand against the blast of a hurricane. He feels that if he be put into the furnace he can abide the fire through grace, but that apart from grace he is as tow before the flame or like wax before the fire. The well-instructed believer is very much afraid of himself; he dares not go into temptation, for he feels that a man who carries a bomb-shell within him ought to mind that he keeps away from the sparks, and that he who has a powder-magazine in his heart ought not to play with fire. He knows that in himself considered, apart from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he would as certainly go back to his old sins, and fall again into his past lusts, as do those who crucify the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. Ah, my hearer, if you do not know this, I am afraid you do not know yourself, and if you do not know yourself you do not know Christ. We must traverse the stripping-room before we can enter into the robing-room. Pull that bracelet from the man's wrist; off with that crown; strip him of the purple robe; away with those sandels; tear up that cloak. Leave him naked. He is never fit to be clothed till he is naked. Let his foul skin be seen, for he cannot be washed till he can see his filth. Now set his feet upon the rock, but first of all pull his feet from the sand, for as long as they have any foot-hold anywhere else, they cannot stand upon the rock of ages safely and securely. I hope that very many of you do know that your iniquities, like the wind, will carry you away, unless you have the grace of God.

5. Those souls upon whom God's sunlight has once shone are also painfully aware of their own *natural weakness and slothfulness in prayer*. What saith the text? "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." In my carnal state I used to hear a minister whose preaching was, as far as I could make it out, "Do this, and do that, and do the other, and you will be saved." According to his theory, to pray was a very easy thing; to make yourself a new heart was a thing of a few instants and could be done at almost any time, and I really thought that I could turn to Christ when I pleased, and that therefore I could put it off to the last part of my life when it might be conveniently done upon a sick bed. But when the Lord gave my soul its first shakings in conviction, I soon knew better. I went to pray; I did pray, God knoweth, but it seemed to me that I did not. What, *I* approach the throne! Such a wretch as *I* lay hold on the promise! *I* venture to hope that God could look on me! It seemed impossible. A tear, a groan, and sometimes not so much as that, and that was all. An "Ah!" a "Would that," a "But,"—the lip could not utter more. It was prayer, but it did not seem so then. Oh! how hard is prevailing prayer to a poor God, provoking sinner! Where was the power to lay hold on God's strength or wrestle with the angel? Certainly not in me, for I was weak as water, and sometimes hard

as the nether millstone. Every believer feels at times a fearful inability in prayer; he goes to the throne of grace, and groans, and comes forth from his closet no more refreshed than a man who rises from his bed after having tossed to and fro all night. He knows what it is to pray, but he cannot perform the duty. He knows there is a power in prayer, but he cannot get the power. The chariot-wheels are knocked off, and he drags heavily along where once his soul was like the chariot of Aminadib. Well, I think we do not know ourselves unless we have been led to see that God must draw nigh to us, or else we cannot draw nigh to him, and unless we have been led to loathe ourselves, because of this indifference in prayer, we have not yet discovered what we are. Oh! to think that we cannot pray! This is not an inability for which we deserve to be comforted, but a damnable inability. This is one of the greatest sins we have, that we cannot approach our Maker. It is an awful and terrific thing that we should have become so wicked and so vile, that we cannot even ask for mercy, and cry for it aright. This is no excuse, but an aggravation of our guilt. Have you felt this, my hearer? Oh! if thou hast not, I fear thou hast to begin again, and learn the first elements of faith.

6. Lastly on this point, that soul which has once perceived itself in the black colours of its iniquity, has discovered that through sin it has lost all the favour and the love of God which might have come if it had been without sin, for so saith the text, "For thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities." It is no thing to play with—that hiding of God's face. When the prophet says, "Thou hast consumed us," it is a dreadful word. Do you see that burning fiery furnace? The soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar are about to cast three men bound into it, that they may be consumed, and the fire is exceeding hot, so that it may consume them quick. To the apprehension of an awakened sinner that is his fate; he feels that he must be cast into hell and be utterly consumed. Nay, more, with some, though not with all to the same degree, the man is consumed; some of us feel as if our locks were crisp even now with that awful burning through which we passed when we were first convinced of sin. Bunyan seems to have enjoyed the full light of God's countenance all the more because of his distinct recollection of the solemn period of conviction through which he passed. If you read Hart's hymns, you will be struck with their singular clearness concerning Christ and full justification. That certainty and assurance results very much from the fact that Hart retained to his dying day, the remembrance of his experience when he was under the whip of the law. You will remember that when he is trying to describe his own feelings, he fails to do so, and he adds:—

> "Oh! what a dismal state was this!
> What horrors shook my feeble frame.
> But, brethren, surely you can guess,
> For you, perhaps, have felt the same."

Now, I do not think that all who know the Lord suffer this consumption to the same extent; but there must be in your heart, if ever you are saved at all, there must be heard a voice putting down every hope but

good works." Will not that plea suffice? Soul, use it and try its prevalence!

But hark thee, sinner. There is a sweeter plea than any in the verse before us, for this is an Old Testament text; but I must take thee to the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for the plea that never fails. It is this, "Lord, it is written that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; if there was never a sinner in the world but one, that sinner I am. If thou writest it in capital letters I will wear it on my brow, for 'I the chief of sinners am;' I am a sinner not only generally but particularly, for I have broken this law, and that law, and I have gone astray always. But Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, and thou hast said, 'This is a faithful saying,'—It is, Lord, and therefore I believe it; and thou hast added—'It is worthy of all acceptation,' therefore, good Lord, I accept it. I believe that Jesus came to save sinners. I trust myself in his hands to save me." It is done, it is done. You are saved, you are saved; your sins are gone; your unrighteousnesses are forgiven; you are accepted in the beloved. What makes this plan so hard? Brethren, it is hard because it is so easy. If it were a hard way of salvation, man would like it; but because it is so easy we cannot bear it. We are so proud, that to be saved on charity; to come to Christ and trust him to save us; to have done with saving ourselves, and to let him do it all—Oh, this is so humbling. It will just suit you then, poor soul, for you have said in the words of my text, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Come thou before God and say, "Lord, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, have mercy upon me," and he will answer thee when thou makest mention of the blood, and he will say—"Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." Oh! there is hope yet, lost soul; there is hope yet! To the very gates of hell let my voice ring this morning—lost soul, there is hope yet. If thou hast passed those gates there is no hope; but this side the gate of hell there is hope for thee. Not in thyself but in Jesus is thy help found. Look to him; he dies; one look will save you. Look to him; he lives; he pleads before the Father's throne. Faith in the living Saviour will make you a living soul. May God in his mercy empty you of self, and then faith is easy, but until you are brought there, faith is impossible. May you be brought to know that you are utterly lost, and then when I pronounce the words of Christ—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,"—thou wilt joyfully obey the divine commandment, and thou wilt find in Christ all that thy needy spirit wants. I ask the prayers of the Church very earnestly that God may bless the testimony of this morning to the fetching in of many. "Brethren, pray for us." Do not cease your prayers. Oh! that we may have an ingathering to the Church again as we have had so many times, and unto *him*, even to *him* shall be the honour for ever! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD OR SELF—WHICH?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 9TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves."—Zechariah, vii. 5, 6.

AFTER the Jewish people had been thoroughly cured of their idolatrous tendencies by their seventy years of captivity, they fell into another evil; they became superstitiously regardful of ceremonies but they lost the life and spirit of devotion, and neglected the weightier matters of the law. Phariseeism, in the spirit of it, had commenced, in the time of Zechariah. Great attention was paid to the formalities and externals of worship, but the vitality of godliness was unknown. The mint, the anise, the cummin of religion—these were all strictly tithed; but truth, mercy, charity, justice, were trodden under foot. They multiplied ceremonies to themselves, apart from God's Word. They had fasts which Moses never commanded, and feasts of which the tabernacle in the wilderness knew nothing. They had ordained for themselves a certain fast for the burning of the temple by the Chaldees, and a question which seemed to them very important had arisen, as to whether this fast should be observed now that the temple was rebuilt. The Jews in Persia, sent an honourable deputation to Jerusalem upon this important matter. They received no direct answer, for it was nothing to the Lord their God whether they fasted or not, since he had not commanded it, and could not accept their will-worship at their hands. Learn this, then, with regard to all religious ceremonies whatever; if they be not expressly commanded of God it is a small matter how men keep them; in fact, it were vastly better if they left them alone. Some time ago in Convocation, the very wonderful question was discussed, as to whether a child's father and mother might be its godfather and godmother. Is there not a prior question? Does the Lord ordain such offices in his Word? And yet again, has he anywhere commanded infants to be sprinkled? What matters it how the deed is done if the Lord has not ordained it in Holy Scripture? To the law and to the testimony; if ye find it not there, though you keep every rubric of your church, ye

have not done it unto God, for he hath not required it at your hands. "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." I would that all our Churches were willing to search for the foundation of all their ceremonies in Scripture. This is the way to promote true Christian unity; not to hide our views, but to speak plainly; not to settle down upon our old rituals, but to examine them and see whether they be of God or not, for let us be sure of this, that if we do anything which is not according to God's Word, in whatever spirit we may do it, or however well we may perform it, it is not a service that God can accept of us. However, though these deputies obtained no answer upon that point, since it was not material whether they did fast or not, yet they had some information upon a much more vital matter. They were informed by the questions asked of them, that all religion must have God for its object, or else it was nothing before him. The question was solemnly asked of them, and upon its answer all depended:—"When ye fasted did ye fast *unto me?* or when you feasted on your solemn feast-days did ye not eat to yourselves and drink to yourselves?" I shall try this morning to work out the great scriptural truth, first showing that *in our religious worship our doing it unto God is a main thing;* secondly, that *in the world our service to God must be done for his own sake, or else it is nothing;* and, thirdly, we shall use our text as a *test of our condition before God,* asking ourselves solemnly whether we have lived unto God, or whether we have been all this while living to ourselves, eating to ourselves, and drinking to ourselves.

I. First of all, then, WITH REGARD TO OUR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP. You know, brethren, there are various modes in which the Christian Church attempts to worship God; and we are not about this morning to discuss the acceptableness of these different methods—whether it shall be by book or extemporary; whether it shall be with sound of music or with the joyous voices of men and women; whether the ceremony shall be pompous or simple; whether it shall be under the consecrated dome, or in an ordinary chamber. These are matters of secondary moment, for they concern only the carcase, while we have now to deal with the soul of worship. We are apt to fall into a mistake, and value the services of the Sabbath-day for something which God does not regard. For instance, in the singing of God's praises, it is well to have melody that we may sing with our understanding as well as with our spirit; but after all, if any man shall rest satisfied because his voice has been in tune and time, in singing the words of the Psalm, if he shall think that therefore he has praised God, alas, how mistaken he is! Or in the prayer, if we shall think that a certain fluency, an apparent reverence and propriety of expression are the only needful things, and if we forget that we are worshipping God, alas! what is our prayer? We might as well have been dumb. And if in preaching, our hearers shall regard merely the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the eloquence, or the fitness of the style, alas! they have not worshipped God, because in all this they forget the question:—"Have ye heard as unto God? Have ye sung as unto God? Did ye pray as unto God?" For if not, though the sermon be orthodox and eloquent, though the singing be as the voice of many waters, though the prayer go up to heaven, and seem to be unexceptionable in expression, yet

the worship is only vain and worthless, lacking holiness *unto the Lord*, since it is not done as unto God, and is not really an offering unto him. Take that as the guide this morning, and I think I may speak home to your consciences. How many, who frequent the house of prayer, worship God *carelessly?* They sing, but with no more heart than if they were singing in their own houses some common ditty. The prayer is offered, and often that is the dullest part of the service, and their eyes are gazing about here and there; or if the eyes of the head be shut, the eyes of their heart are open enough, looking not, however, to God, but to vanity. And when the sermon is delivered they care but little for its precious message, or if they lend some attention, yet what a weariness it is! You see in some congregations nodding heads, and eyes that are given to slumber. They think there is nothing particular in hearing the gospel; they listen to the entreaty of God's ambassador as to a thrice told tale, but that is all. Were it an oration upon politics, they might be a great deal more enthusiastic than they are, and if it were anything which touched their personal estates, they would be forward to catch every word, but as it is only about their souls, only about eternity, only about God, it does not signify. Now, think ye, think ye that your thus coming up to God's house is acceptable in his sight? If ye come thus, ye have not come to *him*. Ye have not come to worship *him;* how can he take this at your hands? What think you if a courtier who should pretend to be doing honour to his monarch, should be nodding before the throne, sleeping in the audience-chamber? What think you if some person should have audience of a king, and while the petition is yet in his hand should be gazing about with a vacant stare, or turning his back upon the throne? Surely this were insult, instead of homage, and well might the gates of the palace be barred for ever against the wretch whose conduct should be thus infamous. Let us take care that we are not satisfied with merely sitting in our pews, and maintaining an apparently decorous behaviour in God's house, for

> "God abhors the sacrifice,
> Where not the heart is found."

A larger number of our attendants miss the mark in another way. They are not altogether careless, but still their worship is not done as unto God, for they are content with the service itself. Provided they have sung—have somewhat joined in the prayer—and to some degree enjoyed the service, they are content, although no dew from heaven rests upon their hearts. They look merely to man, and no further, and if the minister should be in a low frame of mind,—and what mortal can help that at times?—these persons never having learned to seek God in his sanctuary, say that it was no means of grace to their souls. The pitcher was empty, and as they had not learned to draw direct from the well they went home thirsty. They looked to the man, and never thought of his Master; it is no marvel that the opportunity has been a lost one to them. Blessed are they who come up to God's house to use the means but not to rest in them; desiring to find the God of the means in the means! Oh! how glorious it is when the song carries me up to heaven's courts! How blessed when the prayer is offered, if my soul can

breathe its desire into the ear of Christ and have fellowship with him. Oh! it is blessed to be in God's house when the Lord himself is in our midst. What if the preacher should miscarry?—yet if all the while I am lifting up my heart to God, desiring that the truth should be blessed to me, I shall profit under him. He may be clownish, but he will not be so to me. His expressions may be out of order, but they will reach my heart; and even if *his* heart should not be affected, yet mine will be if I am having dealings with God, and not with man. Oh! how many of you come here to hear the man, to gratify your curiosity, to regale your ears, to find matter for conversation, but not to behold the beauty of the Lord, nor to enquire in his temple. Well, we are glad to see you anyhow, for we hope that being in the way God will meet with you, but I would have you savingly converted, and then you will come here to hear God's Word, to talk to God, to speak to God. Is it not true that some of you do not use the day of rest and the house of prayer for their real purpose, which is that man may meet with God? There was a man who professed great love to his friend, and therefore he would spend a day in his company. He rapped at the door, and the servant said the master was not at home. "It does not signify," said he, "I will wait inside and take my ease; I shall do quite as well though the master be not at home if you will bring me abundance to eat and drink." So he entered, and took a chair and made himself very comfortable, and feasted to his heart's content; and he went home boasting that he had enjoyed the visit. Then his companions asked him—"Was the master there?" "Oh no, he was not there." "But I thought you went to see *him?*" He had pretended a great desire to have converse with his friend but evidently he was false, for if he had gone to see the master, and the master had not been at home, he would have said—"Well, I will even call another day, but I have missed my errand this time." So there are some who go up to the house of God; they think they go there to worship *the Lord;* they have no enjoyment of his presence, they have no communion with his Son, they have no indwellings of his Spirit, but they enjoy the day for all that, which shows they did not go to worship God at all. When we put the question to them—"Did ye at all fast unto the Lord" their answer must be—"Nay, verily, we only sought self; we did not seek the Master's presence."

But others there be, and these are not a few, who think they worship God acceptably when they merely do so as *a matter of custom.* It is a lamentable fact that in many of the suburban parts of this great city, where new villas are rising up, thousands of the people never attend any place of worship: I will not say because, being in the country, they are withdrawn from the wholesome *re*straints of society, but because at any rate they do not feel its *con*straints. They can spend the morning in bed, or the afternoon in the garden, too glad that they are not under the sorrowful necessity of going to a place of worship. But with some of you it is the reverse. You are in such a position that you would hardly be counted respectable if you did not frequent a church or chapel, and so you go. The Sabbath-morning very properly sees you arrayed in your best garments, and you enter the house of God with the multitude; but if you go there only as a matter of custom do not think that God

accepts your worship, for you rather obey your neighbours than your God. Have you ever heard of the traveller, who, when he was in Protestant England, was accounted a devout follower of the Reformers. Sometime after his course of journey led him to Rome, and as often as there was the mass he might be observed among the crowd, bowing as they bowed, a thorough Papist. Soon he made a journey to Mecca that he might see the world, and there, among the Mahomedans he was as reverent as any; quite willing to receive the dogma of the prophet. Some who heard thereof said, "What is this? How act you so?" and he said, "Oh, when I am at Rome I do as Rome does, and when I am at London I do as London does, and when I am at Mecca I do as Mecca may do; it is all the same to me;" and straightway all who knew him despised him. We have some such in England. They happen to live near Christian people and they do the same as they do. Oh, my dear hearers, I fear many of you would have been idolators if that had been the custom of the country, and if so what is the value of your worship?

No doubt, also, there is a small sprinkling of people attending all places of worship who come as *a matter of profit*, which is detestable. We have heard of some country towns,—I do not think it takes place much in London, for it does not pay,—where people ask, "Which is the most respectable congregation in this town? We must take a seat there." Now what are they doing when they pretend to be worshipping God? Why, sirs, if that be the reason why they go to a certain place of worship, they are following their trade on the Lord's day, and as far as the sin of it goes, they might as well have their shop open as shut, for they carry their shops on their backs to the place of worship. We suspect that some come among us for this reason. Christ had such followers. There were loaves and fishes to be given away, and therefore they fell into raptures; "What a sweet preacher! What a profitable ministry! We are so fed under him:" and they flocked in multitudes to listen to him that they might afterwards eat and be filled. I remember one case of this kind that came under my own knowledge. Preaching about in the country, I had often noticed in a certain county, a man in a smock frock who was a regular follower. He seemed to be amazingly attentive to the service, and thinking that he looked an extremely poor man, I one day gave him five shillings. When I preached twenty miles off he was there again, and I gave him some more help fancying that he was a tried child of God. When I was preaching in another place in the same county, he was there again, and the thought suddenly struck me whether that man did not find something more attractive in the palms of my hands than in the words of my lips, so I gave him no more. The next time I saw him he put himself in my way, but I avoided him; and then at last being again in the same county, he came up and asked me to give him something. "No," I said, "you will not have anything now; I see what you have come for; you have only come pretending to delight in the Word, and to be so profited by it, whereas it is profit you get out of me, not profit from the gospel." These people—there are such in all congregations—ought, at least, to be well aware that their pretended worship of God is detestable in his sight. If you have had meat in your hands, and a dog has followed you,

you might feel pleased that the dog had taken a great affection to your person, but as soon as the meat was gone, when he turned his tail, you discovered that it was an affection for the meat, and not for you. Such are some who come to God's house. They have an affection for what is given by the charity of the saints; but they have no love to the saints nor to the saints' Master. The sooner such people mend their ways the better. This cupboard love, this love of God for what they get out of him, is despicable to honest men, and it must be an abomination in the sight of the Most High.

Once more only upon this point. Beyond a doubt, some public worship is offered by those who attend our sanctuaries, *in the idea that they are getting merit by it.* Well, sir, and so you prayed because you thought to atone for sin by it; you sang to help yourself to heaven; you heard a sermon to help yourself to be accepted before God? You have done it to yourself, and the Lord's voice to you is: "Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" Did ye not eat unto yourselves, and drink unto yourselves?" All religious worship done with a view that we may thereby be meritoriously saved, is really only a service rendered unto our own interests, and not unto God. How can we expect the Eternal One to accept as an offering to himself, what is really an offering to our own selfishness? "But is not a man to do anything to save himself?" say you. No, I answer; No. He is to let Christ save him. By faith, he is to put himself in Christ's hands, that Christ may save him; then after that he may do as much as ever he can out of gratitude to his Saviour. Why, sirs, when your servile works are done a righteousness to gain, do you think you win the approbation of heaven? What, build a palace for God out of the mud of your own selfishness? Think that God can be bribed to bless you by deeds which you have done with self as a motive? God hateth that which a man doth with the idea that he can win the Lord's love thereby; you must come to God as undeserving of anything at his hands; take his love and his mercy freely, and then go and do good works, and pray, and sing, and preach if you can, but never with a view of getting good to yourselves thereby, but only that you may glorify him, and at last may enter into his rest. I say, and with this I leave the point, that that worship, and that worship only which is for God and not for self in any sense, God accepts; and whether it be with a view to temporal profit, or from mere custom, or with a view to merit, that we attend to spiritual ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or what not, we have done nothing that God can receive, and we might as well have left the whole undone.

II. But now I shall turn to a wider circle for a moment or two. BY THIS WE MAY TEST ALL THE OTHER RELIGIOUS ACTS OF MEN.

Many a brave deed has been done with the sound of which the world has rung for years which nevertheless has never been received by the most High. Some have served God out of ostentation, that they might show what great things they could do. Remember Jehu when he said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord God of Hosts." Jehu has many imitators. "Lend me your pen, sir." "Yes." "I hereby write my name for five thousand pounds at the head of the list. Is not that an acceptable offering to God? There are very few in England that

will give as much as I have; put it in all the newspapers; the world should know that there still exists one liberal man?" Is not that splendid gift accepted? Nay, brethren, certainly not, because it was given for his own praise, and for his own glory, and not for the glory of God. So, if it be our earnestness in preaching the gospel, if we are only earnest in order that people may think us earnest—if we are only zealous that men may say of us, "That man does more than the rest; what a zealous, earnest man he is,"—we have offered nothing to God; we have been sacrificing on our own shrines, and offering incense before our own image. A certain king had a minstrel, and he bade him play before him. It was a day of high feasting; the cups were flowing, and many great guests were assembled. The minstrel laid his fingers among the strings of his harp and woke them all to the sweetest melody, but the hymn was to the glory of himself. It was a celebration of the exploits of song which the bard had himself performed. He had excelled high Howell's harp, and emulated great Llewellyn's lay. In high-sounding strains he sang himself and all his glories. When the feast was over the harper said to the monarch, "Oh King, give me my guerdon; let the minstrel's mede be paid." And the king said, "Thou hast sung unto thyself; pay thyself; thine own praises were thy theme; be thyself the paymaster." He cried, "Did I not sing sweetly? O, king, give me the gold!" But the king replied, "So much the worse for thy pride that thou shouldest lavish such sweetness upon thyself." Brethren, even if a man should grow grey-headed in the performance of good works, yet when at the last, it is known that he has done it all to himself, his Lord will say, "Thou hast done well enough in the eyes of man, but so much the worse, because thou didst it only to thyself, that thine own praises might be sung, and that thine own name might be extolled." That is a singular text in Hosea—"Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself;" there was fruit, only it was brought forth to himself, which before God is emptiness. Take care of ostentation. Be ready to serve God when none can see you. Prefer not to let your right hand know what your left hand doeth. Shun the very thought of getting a market for your own honour. Go ye behind the wall and serve the Master, sooner than sound the trumpet before you in the streets. When Mr. Morrison, the Missionary to China, needed an assistant, Mr. Milne, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Milne, offered himself. As soon as the examiners had talked with him, they saw that his heart was right enough, but he had a clownish look, and a dullness of expression; when the youth was gone out of the room, one of the examiners said, "He is scarcely a proper person to send, we need a man of greater intellect." At last they agreed that they had better send him as a servant, the servant of the mission, to do the work of the household, clean Dr. Morrison's boots, and such like things, I suppose. So Dr. Phillip was requested to communicate this to him, and he told him that the committee did not feel he was qualified to go as a Missionary, would he mind going as a servant? The youth's eye sparkled and he said, "It is too much honour for me even if I am but a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the Lord my God." And thus he went forth, and afterwards, as you know, became one of the most useful

of missionaries. How many a man would have said, "Gentlemen, I did not come for that; this is treating me with a want of respect. Surely you do not know who I am, or else you would not suppose for a moment that I would be willing to be a mere drudge and menial servant!" They know not the Lord who only desire his service for the honour which it brings, but they have their hearts right before him who want no honour for themselves, but only desire that *his* name may be extolled above the hills, that *he* may be made famous in the earth. What would you say of a workman whom you should employ to build a house for you, and who, when the house was done, should prepare a piece of stone with his own name upon it to be put right in the front so that everybody might say that he had built it? Why, you would say, "No, sir, it is mine to choose the inscription; it is my house, not yours." Did you ever hear of a pen that after a book had been written, required its own name placed at the bottom? 'Twas enough for the real author to be known; what mattered it whether it was a gold pen, or a steel pen, or a quill pen that wrote it? So you and I are only God's pens; he uses us, and why ought we to care to be known? No, let the real author be known, for "we are *his* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There was the difference between John Wesley and George Whitfield. Mr. George Whitfield had all the popularity of Mr. Wesley, and all the opportunity that John had to make a denomination, but he said, "No; I do not condemn my brother John, but I could not do what he does; let my name perish; let only Christ's name last for ever." The day will come when the man who was willing that his name should perish rather than it should supplant the brighter name of Christ, will shine all the brighter for this self-denial. Let us mind that we have no sinister ends, no selfish objects in view; but let it be God alone, Christ alone, and his glory alone, or else we may ask ourselves the question afresh: "Did ye at all fast *unto me*, even *to me?* And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves?*"

Again upon this point. How many of our religious actions, our attempts to propagate the gospel of Christ have been very greatly promoted by strife and emulation. Sometimes the strife has occurred in a single congregation, and a new chapel has been built because some few disrespectful words were spoken, and a slight disagreement ripened and rotted into a quarrel. The general public have thought, "Well, the persons who contributed to that new place must certainly have done some service to God," whereas it may be that it was really service to the devil, for they only built it that they might gratify their own resentments, and say to those whom they left, "See how well we can do without you." How often have different Christians striven to increase their congregations or their denominations out of a spirit of emulation. The Wesleyans were awake, therefore the Baptists must be; or the Church of England had a school, and therefore the Dissenters must; how many have run in the race that they might keep up with or exceed their rivals. Now concerning religious rivalry and religious strife, whatever others may have said of it, we only say, "These things are not of God." The Lord may say of all that we have ever done

out of mere denominational pride, out of emulousness, and to make our own names great in the earth—"Did ye at all fast *unto me*, even *to me?* When ye did eat and when ye did drink, did ye not do it unto yourselves?" I would to God we were all contending earnestly for the faith, and provoking one another to love and to good works, but to do good for the mere sake of doing more than some person whom I look upon as my rival is not serving God; it is indulging my weaker passions under the pretence of honouring the Lord. Oh! brothers and sisters, I have had to ask myself this question many a score times, "Have I done it unto God?" I have gone groaning from this platform because I could not preach as I wished, but this has been my comfort, "Well; I did desire to glorify Christ; I did desire to free my conscience of the blood of men; I did want to tell men the whole truth whether they liked it or not." But sometimes when I have got on better, and the words have flowed fluently, and the sentences have had a little polish about them (they have not much at any time) I have thought, "Well, I went on pretty well this morning;" just then my conscience has smote me,—"You made the people pleased, but did you glorify your Master? Did you lay the axe at the foot of the tree? Did you come down on their consciences? Did you strive to drive the nail right into their hearts? You might have done better with rough words than with those garnished utterances." I have no uneasiness about rough sentences, but I have when I have not been earnest in my Master's cause. Oh! I think it must be so with you sometimes. You Sunday-school teachers, are you sure that you teach for Jesus Christ? May it not be possible that you teach for custom, or that you do it because you like the association of your fellow teachers? You tract distributors, are you sure that when you distribute the tracts it is with an idea of winning souls to Christ? Is it not because your conscience tells you you ought to be doing something? And you who go out preaching, are you sure that you preach only for Christ's glory? Does it not sometimes happen that you are tempted to glorify yourselves and try to be fine and great when you ought to be simple, and plain, and earnest with the souls of men? Oh! when I think of some who spend all the week writing out their sermons, and touching up every line and every sentence, I fear there must be something of self there; and when I hear some preachers with such splendid diction, with words so nicely picked, I cannot help thinking that there must be a sacrificing to the genius of oratory or to the beauty of eloquence, rather than to the Master's cause. I say of every thing that is done for self—down with it, down with it, let Dagon fall. Break these images, every one of them, smite them like the proud Philistine or the boastful Babylonian king. What have we to do with idolatrous self-worship? O Lord, deliver us from it.

I shall not detain you longer upon this point when I have said another word. Though this is a Protestant land it is beyond all question that there are some Popish enough to perform great religious acts by way of merit. What a goodly row of almshouses was erected by that miserly old grinder of the poor as an atonement for his hoarding propensities! What a splendid donation to that hospital! A very proper thing indeed, but the person who left it never gave a farthing to a beggar in his life, and

he would not have given it now only he could not take it with him, and so he has left it as an atonement for sin. Sometimes persons think that the doing of some outrageous religious act will take them to heaven; frequenting Church prayers twice a day, fasting in Lent, decorating the altar with needlework, putting stained glass in the window, giving a new organ or such like, at the suggestion of their priest they do many such things, and thus they go on working like blind asses at a mill, from morning to night, and make as much real progress. Do I address any one such person here? I do not find fault with you for what you do, but I do find fault with you for why you are doing it. If you dream that you are saving yourselves thereby, remember that your acts are selfish acts, and that there is nothing good in them. They may be good things in themselves, but as they are done not unto God, but evidently with a view to your own welfare, they are done to yourselves, and he cannot therefore accept them. Let there be never such splendid deeds of alms-giving, never such marvellous mortifications of the flesh, never such devout attendings at daily prayer, they avail nothing before God, when they proceed from a self-righteous heart. Away with them, away with them all; they are dross and dung before the Most High, if you bring them to him with a view of purchasing salvation thereby. No, ye must have done with these and trust in Jesus only. When a man can say, "I am saved; Christ is mine:" then he can serve God acceptably, and his deeds shall be received through Christ Jesus.

III. Now for our last point. It seems to me that our text may be a TEST OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.

Brethren in Christ Jesus, may I solemnly ask you now to put your souls into the scales for a few minutes by way of self-examination. What can you and I say with regard to our lives since we have known the Lord? Have we lived unto Christ? Dare we take the Apostle Paul's motto—"For me to live is Christ, to die is gain?" Oh, beloved, it is not what we have done, so much as with what object we have done it; for every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the heart. Have we in our hearts longed to serve *him*? "Oh," I hear one say, "it was little I could do, sir; I was poor; I could not give him gold; I was uneducated, I could not give him words." Ah, my brethren, it is possible that what you have been able to do may be more acceptable than what some others have done, if you can say "I did not desire mine own honour. I was content to be humble, to be obscure, to be unknown, and to be forgotten, if I might but lift *him* up and praise *him* in my little sphere, and make *him* glorious among men." I fear, beloved brethren, that some of us do but little for Christ even outwardly, and I blush to confess that in that little which we do there is so much that is spoiled by our looking after self. Have we not sometimes prayed at the prayer-meeting with the view of being thought gifted men! Have we not joined a church that we might be a little better thought of? May we not have laboured more abundantly that there might be the whisper about—"So-and-so is a flourishing Christian, a useful man?" Do we not compliment ourselves thus—"Well, people think very highly of me; they say so-and-so, and it must be all right?" Are we not smuggling over the frontier some of the

merchandise of pride? It has been lately remarked, and not before it was necessary, that this is an age in which the word pride means what it never meant before. You hear gentlemen on the platform say, "I am proud;" you hear the minister himself when speaking of something that has been done for him, "I am proud." The words, "I am proud," do not mean any hurt now, because we have forgotten that pride in any shape and in every shape is detestable in the eyes of God. We talk of a decent pride. I saw a good young woman the other day—I dare say she is here this morning—and she told me she could not come now on a Sunday because her clothes were getting so bad, and she said, "I thought it was decent pride to stop away." And I said, "No, my sister, no pride is decent." I saw her last Sabbath-day standing down there, and I have no doubt she enjoyed what was said as well in her cotton dress as she would have done if she could have worn her silk one. All pride is indecent. A few Sundays ago, when we had the mourning for Prince Albert, some people could not go to church because the dress-makers had been so busy that they could not get their black things ready, and it was called *decent* pride which kept them at home, but I say again it was indecent pride—indecent pride such as the Lord God of Hosts abhors. We must have done with these prides, but yet I do fear that pride has so mixed with all we have done, and so stained our best acts, that we have reason to cry out this morning, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; Lord have mercy upon us, for Jesu's sake."

There is another arrow in my quiver and it must be shot out. Alas! alas! I address some this morning who never did anything for God in their lives; to whom it would make no difference if there were no God at all, except that they would be rather glad than otherwise. A man; a man, mark that, made in the image of his maker, and yet he has never said a good word for his Creator! The breath in his nostrils this morning is the gift of God; the comforts of his home are gifts from the liberality of the God that has made him, and yet he has never done anything for that God in his life! Touch him upon the point of what he has done for man, and he may have done much; let men applaud him. If a great general has won battles for men let men honour him. If a philanthropist has done much for men let men be grateful. If you have spent your time for your families let your families thank you. But there are some here who have done nothing for God. "Hear, O Heavens, and give ear O Earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but they know not, neither do they consider." A man would not keep even a dog which never looked to him with thankfulness; never frisked about his feet with joy at his liberality; and yet here are men more brutish than their own dogs—fed by God and never thankful to him, they have never done anything for him in all their lives! I know there are many here who, if their consciences sleep not, must stand convicted. Again I repeat it, we will not touch you upon the point of what you have done for man, but let me remind you that man did not make you, that it is not your deeds for others that can save you, it is not your nation that can save your soul; it is God; it is God, and yet you have forgotten him, and he

is not in all your thoughts. You can go to bed without a prayer to him; you can rise in the morning without a hymn of thankfulness! A God forgotten in his own world, a God unknown by his own creature, a God—and such a God! so good, so gracious, so tender, so loving—a God who has given his own Son to die, and yet by his own creature so lightly deemed that he gives him not a word or thought. Well, soul, well, sinner, what a mercy it is that God has not forgotten thee; if he had forgotten to give thee thy bread, where hadst thou been? If he had forgotten to let the sun shine on thee—if he had forgotten to let the fields yield their harvests—if he had forgotten to keep back the fever—if he had forgotten thee when thou wert lying last year upon a sick bed—or when thou wert out in that storm at sea, and the wind had rent away the mast—or when thy gun exploded in thine hand—thou hadst been howling in hell now, but he has not forgotten thee and thou art yet alive. Oh! may his longsuffering lead thee to repentance for having lived as if there were no God to love, and yourself the only thing worth caring for.

But, soul, let me remind thee that longsuffering does not last for ever. The Roman judges were attended by lictors, as you know; these lictors carried on their shoulders a bundle of rods, and in the centre an axe. Now, when the judge condemned any man to be beaten by the rods, the following scene always took place. The rods were tied about with leather thongs, which were knotted a great many times. When the judge condemned the man to be beaten, his back was stripped, the lictor then untied one knot, and then another, and another, which took some little time, and during all this time the judge was looking in the face of the person to be scourged, watching him if he saw hardness of heart and rebellion there; then the blows came heavy, and perhaps the axe followed; but if he looked in the criminal's face, and saw repentance expressed there, it often happened that before the last knot was untied, the judge would say, "the punishment is remitted, tie up the rods again." Now, you that have forgotten God, remember his rods, too, are bound up with many knots. Many of those knots have been untied for some of you. Six years ago you laid ill with the cholera; there was a knot untied then. Before that you had had many warnings that were like loosenings of the knots. And now, this morning, the fingers of Eternal Justice are loosening another of the knots. Sinner, it may be it is the last, and God is looking in thy face now, and what does he see there? Does he see a brow of brass? Is thy heart saying, "I have loved pleasure and after it I will go?" Then it is possible that justice will untie the last knot, and then comes the axe. Take heed, sinner, when once God's axe is taken, thou canst not escape it, he shall dash thee in pieces, and there is none to deliver. O God of mercy, touch the sinner's heart, and make him repent, compel him to feel his need of Christ. Lord, lead him to Jesus, and then the rods shall never be untied, and he shall never be smitten!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DANGER OF DOUBTING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 16TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."—1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

To doubt the lovingkindness of God is thought by some to be a very small sin; in fact, some have even exalted the doubts and fears of God's people into fruits and grace, and evidences of great advancement in experience. It is humiliating to observe that certain ministers have pampered and petted men in unbelief and distrust of God, being in this matter false to their Master, and to the souls of his people. Far be it from me to smite the feeble of the flock; but their sins I must and will smite, since it is my firm conviction, that to doubt the kindness, the faithfulness, and the love of God, is a very heinous offence. Unbelief is akin to Atheism. Atheism denies God's existence—unbelief denies his goodness, and since goodness is essential to God, these doubts do, in reality, stab at his very being. That can be no light sin which makes God a liar; and yet unbelief does in effect, cast foul and slanderous suspicion upon the veracity of the Holy One of Israel. That can be no small offence which charges the Creator of heaven and earth with perjury; and yet, if I mistrust his oath, and will not believe his promise, sealed with the blood of his own Son, I count the oath of God to be unworthy of my trust; and so I do, in very deed, accuse the King of Heaven as false to his covenant and oath. Besides, as I shall have to show this morning, unbelief of God is the fountain of innumerable sins. As the black cloud is the mother of many rain-drops, so dark unbelief is the parent of many crimes. And what if I should say that unbelief concentrates the vice of ages into a moment, and gathers up the virus of all the offences of the race in one transgression? I should not be far from the mark. But I shall say no strong words in the preface, because methinks the incident in David's history, to which I shall call your attention this morning, will be in itself enough to lead you to give your verdict with mine, that unbelief is a damnable sin, that it should be condemned by every believer, should be struggled against, should if possible be subdued, and certainly should be the object of our deep repentance and abhorrence.

Now let us listen to David, and may his sin and sorrow be as beacons to warn us from evil! "David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." First, I shall remark that *what he said in his heart was false;* secondly, we shall ask the question, *how he came to think so?* and then we shall notice, in the third place, *what mischief came of such a hard unbelieving thought.*

I. First, THE THOUGHT OF DAVID'S HEART WAS FALSE. He said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

We might conclude it to be false upon the very face of it, *because there certainly was no evidence to prove it.* On no one occasion had the Lord deserted his servant; he had been placed in perilous positions very often, but not one single instance had occurred in which God's strength was not sufficient for him. The trials to which he had been exposed had been varied; they had not assumed one form only, but many; yet in every case he who sent the trial had also graciously ordained a way of escape. David could not put his finger upon any entry in his diary, and say of it, "Here is evidence that God will forsake me." In looking back through his whole life, from the time when he kept his father's sheep, and slew the lion and the bear, onward to the day when he challenged the Philistine, and upward to this moment, when he had just escaped from his bloodthirsty pursuer, he could not find a solitary fact which should be proof that God had changed his mind, and would leave his anointed to fall into the hand of his cruel enemy.

Now, mark. When you and I doubt God's Word there is this to be said of it, we mistrust it without a cause. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason to doubt my Lord, nor even the shadow of a reason: and I think that you who were in Christ many a year before I knew him can say that since you have trusted in him you have never once had any reason to suspect his faithfulness, or to imagine that he would cast you away. Brethren, we condemn not a man without evidence. Shall we condemn our loving Lord without evidence? I challenge heaven, and earth, and hell this morning to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to heaven I appeal, and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the three realms a single one who can bear evidence of a fact which should disprove the goodness of God, or weaken his claim to be trusted by his servants. Now let our unbelief be scouted; let our sense of justice expel it at once. Let us be just to God as well as to man; and if never yet hath he failed any one of his people, or broken a solitary promise, far be it from us to doubt or to be unbelieving.

> "Thus far we prove that promise good,
> Which Jesus ratified with blood;
> Still he is gracious, wise, and just,
> And still in him let Israel trust."

But, again, what David said in his heart was not only without evidence, but *it was contrary to evidence.* What reason had he to believe that God would leave him? Rather, how many evidences had he to conclude that the Lord neither could nor would leave him? "Thy servant

slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." That was good reasoning. Why not reason like that now, David? Why not say, "Thy servant slew the Philistine, thy servant escaped from the javelin of Saul, when the mad monarch would have pinned him to the wall; thy servant escaped from all the devices of Doeg; thy servant escaped when Saul pursued him in the tracks of the wild goats and in the caves of En-gedi; thy servant escaped out of the power of Achish, the Philistine; and, lo, this Saul, who seeks my head, out of his hand shall I escape also?" That would have been a rational conclusion, a proper way of dealing with evidence; but to say, after such love and kindness past, "He will let me sink at last," was to draw a lying conclusion, and to bring in a verdict directly contrary to the evidence.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, your case is similar—at least mine is. O Lord God! thou hast not left us at any time. We have had dark nights, but the star of love has shone forth amid the blackness; we have had our cloudy days, but our sun has never set until we have had glimpses of sunlight from heaven; we have gone through many trials, but never to our detriment, always to our advantage; and the conclusion from our past experience—at least, I can speak of my own positively—is, that he who hath been with us in six troubles, will not forsake us in the seventh. He hath said, "I will never, never leave thee, and will never, never, never forsake thee." Do not think I repeat these "nevers" too often; I repeat the text just as I find it in the Greek. What we have known of our faithful God, goes to show that he will keep us to the end, and even to the last he will be our helper. Go not, then, contrary to evidence. What should we say of a jury who, after having heard a case in which the verdict should evidently have been "Not Guilty," should, nevertheless, say "Guilty?" Let the earth ring with the cry of indignation. A man has been condemned not only unjustly, but in the very teeth of evidence which proved his innocence. O heaven and earth! ring ye with the universal indignation of honest men, that we should think God untrue, when all the evidence of our past lives goes to prove that he *is* true and faithful to his Word.

"Our Saviour's word abideth sure,
His record is on high,
He who has made our souls secure,
Was never known to lie.

Munitions of stupendous rock
Our dwelling place shall be;
There shall our souls without a shock
The wreck of nature see."

Thirdly, this exclamation of David was *contrary to God's promises.* Samuel had poured the anointing oil on David's head—God's earnest and promise that David should be king. Let David die by the hand of Saul, how can the promise be fulfilled? Many times had God assured his servant David that he had chosen the son of Jesse to be the leader of his people; let him die, and how can that be true? It was, therefore, clean contrary to the promise of God that David should fall by his enemy's hand. Christian! it is contrary to every promise of this precious

book that thou shouldst become the victim of the lion of hell. How, then, could He be true who has said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I never forget thee." What were the value of that promise—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee?" Where were the truth of Christ's words—"I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand?" Where were the doctrines of grace? They would be proved to be a lie, if one child of God perish. Where were the veracity of God, his honour, his power, his grace, his covenant, his oath, if any of those for whom Christ has died, and who have put their trust in him, should nevertheless be cast away? Oh! by this precious Book which thou believest to be true, unless thou art prepared to cast it away as a vile thing of falsehood, distrust not thy Lord, but rather say,

> "The gospel bears my spirit up;
> A faithful and unchanging God,
> Lays the foundation for my hope,
> In oaths, and promises, and blood."

But further, this wicked exclamation of David was *contrary to what he himself had often said.* Here I convict myself, I remember on one occasion, to my shame, being sad and doubtful of heart, and a kind friend took out a paper and read to me a short extract from a discourse upon faith. I very soon detected the author of the extract; my friend was reading to me from one of my own sermons. Without saying a word he just left it to my own conscience, for he had convicted me of committing the very fault against which I had so earnestly declaimed. Often might *you*, brethren, be found out in the same inconsistency. "Oh!" you have said, "I could trust him though the fig-tree did not blossom, and though there were no flocks in the field, and no herd in the stall." Ah! ye have condemned the unbelief of other people, but when it touched you, you have trembled, and when you have come to run with the horsemen they have wearied you, and in the swellings of Jordan *you* have been troubled. So was it with David. What strong words he had often said when he addressed others! He said of Saul, "His time shall come to die; I will not stretch out my hand and touch the Lord's anointed." He felt sure that Saul's doom was signed and sealed; and yet in the hour of his unbelief he says, "I shall yet one day fall." What a strange contradiction was that! What a mercy it is that *God* changeth not, for *we* are changing two or three times a day! But our own utterances, our own convictions aforetime, are clean contrary to the idea that he can ever leave us or forsake us. I appeal, as did that ancient worthy who appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober, I appeal from Philip unbelieving to Philip in a proper state of mind. I bring up before you your own thoughts, your own emotions, your own joyous shouts of song, your own psalms of victory, and I ask you to make these consistent with your present doubts. "Though

a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident." That is David. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." That is David too. "I will love thee, O Lord my strength! The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." That is David. "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." That is David again. Do not fetch up any other evidence; let the man convict himself. His unbelief is absurd from his own showing. So with you and with me, brethren; we are great fools when we doubt God, and that is saying the best of it; what the worst of it is, God only knows. O Lord, from this great sin do thou deliver us!

Yet once more, this exclamation of David was *contrary to the facts*. I mean not merely contrary to the facts that were in evidence, but contrary to the facts that were transpiring at that very moment. Where was Saul? Saul was seeking to a miserable witch of Endor, to raise Samuel from the dead. The spears of the Philistines were being sharpened for the battle, and the arrows were being made ready upon the string that should reach the heart of the king of Israel; and yet here is David, just within a short period of attaining to the kingdom and of seeing Saul slain, saying "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." Oh! if he could have read the mysteries, if he could have understood what the right hand of God was doing, and what the Eternal One designed for him, he would never have whined thus his unbelief. So with you and with me. "Ah!" but you say, "it is not so with me this morning; I am brought very low." Yes, and God is getting ready to bring you up very high. "Ah! but my trouble is a very dreadful one." Yes, and his bare arm is a very potent one, and he knows how to deliver his children. "Yes, but I do not see." No, and you do not need to see. But still it is being done. God's purposes are ripening. Now, do not misjudge them; do not antedate the time of your deliverance, but patiently wait and quietly hope. I know that some of us, when we have escaped from our trials, have said, "Well, if I had known it had been so, I would not have been so troubled about it." Just so, and now, I pray you, though you do not know it, yet still believe it, and do not run contrary to the fact in doubting God. You are very poor, are you? But still you take care of your children. What would you say to your child if he were sitting down at the table crying. "What dost thou cry for, child?" "Because there is no food for me." "Why, silly child," say you, "I was just cutting a slice from the loaf; do not cry till you are sure there is no food." The Lord says to us often, "What dost thou cry for, silly child? This is what I was doing behind the mysteries of my Providence, getting ready some sweet and precious mercy for thee."

"The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercies and shall break
With blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace.
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face."

II. But I must now, while my strength shall hold out, proceed to the second part of the discourse, namely, HOW WAS IT THAT DAVID CAME TO THINK THUS OF HIS GOD?

The first answer I give is, *because he was a man.* The best of men are men at the best; and man at the best, is such a creature that well might David himself say, "Lord, what is man?" If we always performed feats of faith, on-lookers might imagine that we were demi-gods, for in truth, I say that the feats which a man of faith can do, are only surpassed by the doings of the Almighty One himself. Next to omnipotence is faith; nay, not next to it in some respects, for faith can do all that omnipotence can, when God maketh it strong. What were the hosts of the Philistines to Samson? "Heaps upon heaps with the jawbone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men." And what were the pillars of the temple to him? He bowed himself with all his strength, and pulled down the goodly palace of the Philistines upon the princes and upon the assembled multitudes. Faith can do everything; but if faith never gave place to unbelief, we might be tempted to lift up the believer into a demi-god, and think him something more than mortal. That we might see that a man full of faith is still a man, that we might glory in infirmities, since by them the power of God is the more clearly proved, therefore, God was pleased to let the feebleness of man grievously show itself. Ah, it was not David who achieved these former victories, but *God's grace* in David; and now, when that is removed for a moment, see what Israel's champion becomes!

But again: you must consider that *David had been exposed to a very long trial;* not for one week, but for month after month, he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. Now, a man could bear one trial, but a perpetuity of tribulation is very hard to bear. To lay one's head down upon the block seems to me to be comparatively easy, but to be strapped, as were some of the martyrs, to a stake, and be roasted at a slow fire, hour after hour, while the limbs wither in the heat, must have been awful. The martyrdom of an hour is sudden glory, but the martyrdom of a life—there needs something more than human to endure this. To be crucified, to have the hands and feet fast, but the vital parts intact, to have all the pangs of death, with all the strength of life! Now, such was David's trial—always safe but always harassed; always secure through God, but always hunted about by his foe. No place could give him any ease. If he went unto Keilah, then the citizens would deliver him up; if he went into the wood of Ziph, then the Ziphites betrayed him; if he went even to the priest of God, there was that dog of a Doeg to go to Saul, and accuse the priest; even in En-gedi or in Adullam he was not secure; secure, I grant you, in God, but always persecuted by his foe. Now, this was enough to make the wise man mad, and to make the faithful man doubt. Do not judge too hardly of David; at least judge just as hardly of yourselves. I think that if we also were tempted, we should fall as he did.

Then again, you must remember, *David had passed through some strong excitements of mind.* Just a day or so before he had gone forth with Abishai in the moonlight to the field where Saul and his host lay sleeping. They passed the outer circle where the common soldiers lay,

and quietly and stealthily the two heroes passed without awaking any. They came at last to the spot where the captains of the hundreds slept, and they trod over their slumbering bodies without arousing them. They reached the spot where Saul lay, with his spear stuck in the earth at his bolster, and his cruse of water standing, that he might refresh himself if he awoke in the night. And Abishai said, "The Lord hath delivered him into thy hand; let me smite him; I will smite him but this once." David holds back Abishai's hand; he will not permit it, but he says, "As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed." So he escaped from this temptation, as he had aforetime, when he only cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, instead of smiting him as he might have done in the caves of En-gedi. Now, brethren a man may do these great things helped by God, but do any of you know that it is a sort of natural law with us, that after a strong excitement there is a reaction? I will give you a picture. There is Elijah yonder. He has builded an altar unto the Lord his God; the priests of Baal have built another. Elijah appeals to God. "He that answereth by fire, let him be God." The priests of Baal supplicate their God. He answers not. They cut themselves with lancets and with knives. Their dumb idol could not affirm his own deity. Elijah mocks them. "Cry aloud," said he, "for he is a god; peradventure he sleepeth, and needeth to be awakened." So in grim sarcasm he stirs up the wrath of the priests of Baal. No answer comes. Now it is Elijah's turn. He bows the knee, and lifts up his hands to heaven. The flame descends. Be astonished, ye unbelievers! It licks up even the water in the trenches, and the twelve consecrated stones are themselves consumed and are carried in smoke to heaven even as the flame of the burnt-offering. "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one escape," cries the stern Elias. He grasps one of them, and drags him down the hill, and the willing people follow, dragging by the hair of their heads the false priests down to the brook; and then, stripping to his sleeves he dyes himself with the gore-blood of these, the haters of God and the betrayers of his people, till the brook runs red with the smoking blood of Baal's priests. Now what will happen after that? When Elijah gets away from all this heroic daring, because he is a man, there will be a re-action, and lo, he is afraid of Jezebel, who hunted for his life, he cries, "Let me die; I am no better than my fathers;" and he hides himself, till God says, "What dost *thou* here, Elijah?" Now if Elijah, the most iron saint of ancient times, felt the result of human weakness, much more might we expect it of David. So that again I say, we are not to judge *him* too severely, unless we feel prepared with the same measure that we mete to him to mete out to ourselves also.

But there was another reason, for we are not to exculpate David. He sinned, and that not merely through infirmity, but through evil of heart. It seems to us that David had restrained prayer. In every other action of David you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord. He says to Abiathar, "Bring hither the ephod;" and he enters upon no enterprise

without first asking of the Urim and Thummin what was God's mind. But this time what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful [redacted] that he could have found—with his own heart, for "the heart is [redacted]itful above all things and desperately wicked." I do not find that [redacted]mentioned it to God's priest; he did not make it a matter of prayer; he could not venture to pray when he undertook it himself. No, he acted on his own head, and a man will soon find that head is full of addled brains that can judge without appealing to God. Having restrained prayer he did the foolish act; he forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy, and it was no wonder that when he saw the force and strength of the cruel monarch, and the pertinacity of his persecution—he said, "I shall one day fall before him." Brothers and sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief till it turns into a serpent? Restrain prayer! Would you see evils magnified and mercies diminished? Would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold, and your faith diminished in proportion? Restrain prayer! I say unto thee this day, if thou wilt neglect thy closet, all the troubles thou hast ever had shall be as nothing compared with what will yet come upon thee. The little finger of thy future doubts shall be thicker than the loins of thy present mental anguish. Thou shalt know what man can do when he leaves his God, and thou shalt find out in the bitterness of thy soul what an evil thing it is to leave the living fountain and hew out to thyself a broken cistern which can hold no water.

I have thus, I think, as well as may be, opened up the causes of David's unbelief. Some of them will hit your case, my brother. My sister, you may find some portion here. Well, if you find out the cause, remember that the remedy lies somewhere near it. If a forgotten-closet will make thee weep, a frequented-closet will make thee smile. If the excitement of delight has been followed by depression, that excitement itself, if thou seekest it again, will be the best cure, till thy mind, made strong to endure these blessed excitements, shall be sweetly strengthened for the bliss of heaven, and on earth thou shalt be capable of enjoying the heaven which some of the saints have known before they crossed the stream of death.

III. But I must hasten on, for my failing voice tells me I must soon conclude; but not until we have discharged, briefly, the third point: WHAT WERE THE ILL-EFFECTS OF DAVID'S UNBELIEF?

It strikes me that this was one of the sins to which David referred, when he asked God to forgive the sins of his youth, and his former transgressions. We have looked so often at his sin with Bathsheba, that we have been apt to think he had no other faults. Whereas, one must say it, the life of David for some few months after this exclamation, was sad, and one might wish it could be blotted out; it was sad, sad indeed. But we will talk of these matters in detail, though briefly.

What did his unbelief make him do first? *It made him do a foolish thing*, the same foolish thing which he had rued once before. Now, we say a burnt child always dreads the fire; but David had been burnt, and yet, in his unbelief, he puts his hand into the same fire again. He went once to Achish, king of Gath, and the Philistines said, "This is that

David of whom they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands;'" and David was greatly afraid, and "feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard," (which to the Eastern was the surest sign of his being mad if he despised his beard), and they drove him away, for Achish said, "Wherefore, then, have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?" Now, he goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark ye, my brethren, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again. I know we have said, "No; never, never; I know so much by experience what an awful thing this is." Your experience is not worth a rush to you apart from the continual restraints of grace. If your faith fail, everything else goes down with it; and you, you hoary-headed professor, will be as big a fool as a very boy, if God lets you alone. In fact, I must say it, reverencing as I do the hoary head, that of all fools in the world, old fools are the worst. I have seen more falls among aged Christians, than among any other sort, till one has been apt to pray, "Lord, save those who are in the slippery paths of old age." I have often said, there is no Scriptural example of a young man falling into any gross, great sin. All the Scriptural examples are quite the other way, and I think I might say, as the pastor of this Church, that the most sorrowful cases of excommunication we have ever had have been about men who had some grey hair on their heads, or were fathers of families; far oftener than about the young; the reason being, I think, this,—that often the old saint begins to rely on his past experience, and if he does so it is all over with him; for we are just as much fools after seventy years' spiritual education, as we were when we first entered into the school, if the Lord leave us to ourselves. We do grow; we do learn, the Lord being with us; but if we are left, we are no stronger after we have been established in the faith, than we were before. I say again, if we were left at any moment, no matter who we may be, sin would soon be our pursuit, and iniquity our companion. We must offer the same prayer, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe," to the very end of the chapter, and we must finish our lives just as David finished the 119th Psalm with that confession, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments."

But next: for the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water, and we go from bad to worse, *he went over to the Lord's enemies.* Would you have believed it—he that killed Goliath sought a refuge in Goliath's land; he who smote the Philistines trusts in the Philistines; nay, more, he who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish, for Achish said, "Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head for ever," and David became thus the captain of the body-guard of the King of Philistia, and helped to preserve the life of one who was the enemy of God's Israel. Ah, if we doubt God, we shall soon be numbered among God's foes. Inconsistency will win us over into the ranks of his enemies, and they will be saying, "What do these Hebrews here?" and the question will be passed round from man to man, "Is not this David of

whom they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands?' What does David here?" Brother, if "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," I may, without wresting Scripture, say, "Unbelief goeth before destruction, and a doubting spirit before a fall," for so it is. "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" "The just shall live by faith, but if any man turn back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,"—the two sentences put together as if the failure of our faith would surely lead to a turning back to sin.

Have patience with me while I notice once again, that not only thus did David become numbered with God's enemies, but that *he actually went into open sin.* You will read this chapter, and the next, and the next, at your leisure—and you will perhaps have leisure this afternoon; it will keep you from talking about ministers, and about a great many other things that are just as well let alone on Sunday afternoons, for that is the general gossip of Sunday afternoon—"Did you ever hear Mr. So-and-so, and Mr. So-and-so?"—ministers being thought a subject useful for Sundays—that is to say, the pulling of them to pieces. However, if instead of that you will read those chapters, you will be profited. David did two very evil things. He acted the part of a liar and deceiver. Hard words, you will say, to use of David; but they are not too harsh. He went out and slew the Geshurites, and sundry other tribes, and this he did often. When he came back, Achish asked him where he had been, and he said he had been to the south of Judah—that is to say, he made Achish believe that his incursions were made against his own people, instead of being made against the allies of Philistia. This he kept up for a long time; and then, as one sin never goes without a companion, for the devil's hounds always hunt in couples, he was guilty of bloodshed, for into whatsoever town he went, he put *all* the inhabitants to death; he spared neither man, nor woman, nor child, lest they should tell the king of Philistia where he had been. So that one sin led him on to another And this is a very sorrowful part of David's life. He that believes God, and acts in faith, acts with dignity, and other men will stoop before him and pay him reverence; but he who disbelieves his God, and begins to act in his own carnal wisdom, will soon be this, and that, and the other, and the enemy will say, "Aha, aha, so would we have it," while the godly will say, "How are the mighty fallen! how hath the strong man been given up unto his adversary!" O that God the Holy Spirit may preserve our faith in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, that so we may be preserved without spot until the day of his appearing!

Furthermore, not only was David guilty of all this, but he was on the verge of being guilty of still worse sin—*of overt acts of warfare against the Lord's people;* for David having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to battle against Israel, he said to him, "Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men;" and David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness; but then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood. The day comes when a decisive battle is to be fought, and the lords of the Philistines go on before Achish. "Where is David?" "Oh! David is with king Achish in the rear-guard," for the king had made him captain of his life-guard. He was thus raised to a very high position, the companion of

Achish, at his right hand, the commander of the men who were to protect the king in case of danger. Now, there is David, and he is going up against his own people, to fight against his own king, to do mischief against God's own chosen land. It is true that God interposed and prevented it; but this was no credit to David, for you know, brethren, we are guilty of a sin, even if we do not commit it, if we are willing to commit it. And so was it in this case; nay, we are sorry to have to say it, even when the lords of the Philistines interposed, and said, "Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us. And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" still professing a kind of unwillingness to depart, while God knows he was glad enough to get off so evil an errand. What a mercy it is we have some enemies, for God makes our enemies often our best friends. I forget who it is, but I think it is old Bishop Hall, in his meditations, who says, "When the Lord's people have a deadly cancer, there are many of their friends who are too dainty to let the lancet in, but their foes will do it out of spite, and then they get cured thereby; for often doth the Lord let our enemies pierce us in some sore which would have gathered and destroyed us, if it had not been that their cruel wound becomes life to us from the dead." So these lords of the Philistines were David's best friends.

To conclude. The last effect of David's sin—and here it blessedly came to close,—was this: *it brought him into great trial.* Let me tell the story briefly, and I have done. While David was away with king Achish, the Amalekites invaded the south, and attacked Ziklag, which was David's town. For some reason or other they did not put to death any of the inhabitants, but they took away the whole of the men, the few who were left, the women and children, all their household goods, and stuff, and treasures; they took away all; and when David came back to Ziklag, there were the bare walls and empty houses, and Ahinoam and Abigail, his two wives, were gone, and all the mighty men who were with him had lost their wives and little ones; and as soon as they saw it, they lifted up their voice and wept. It was not that they had lost their gold and silver, but they had lost everything. That exiled band had lost their own flesh and blood, the partners of their lives. Then they mutinied against their captain, and they said, "Let us stone David." And here is David, a penniless beggar, a leader deserted by his own men, suspected by them probably of having traitorously given up the town to the foe. And then it is written—and O how blessed is that line!—"And David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Ah! now David is right; now he has come back to his proper anchorage. Blessed afflictions, that drive him back to where he ought to have been all the time! Sin and smart go together; the child of God cannot sin with impunity. Other men may. Ye that fear not God may go and sin as ye like, and often meet with very little trouble in this world as the consequence of it; but a child of God cannot do that. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I

punish you for your iniquities." And so David had the rod more sharply than he had ever had it before, because he had doubted his God. Ah! and what are we? Many of us believe in Christ; but what are we, if God should leave us? Let us heartily join in the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith; hold thou us up, and we shall be safe!"

As for you who have no faith in Christ, this last word. If temporary unbelief is so dreadful, what must habitual unbelief be? "He that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not." God help thee, unbeliever, to trust Jesus. It is life to thee. It will be life to thee in this world and in the world to come. Trust him with thy soul, and he will never forsake thee, but to the end he will keep thee, and in the end he will bless thee, and without end he will glorify thee to be with himself for ever. May the Lord bless the words we have uttered, and make us faithful, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

"'Tis Jesus speaks, the sinner's friend,
Dejected saint, to-day;
Lift up thy head, nor downward bend,
But sing thy fears away.

'Why dost thou, like the turtle, grieve?
Cast all thy cares on me;
My grace sufficient is, believe,
In ev'ry state for thee.

To guard thee from ten thousand ills,
And make thy standing sure,
Sufficient are my *shalls* and *wills*,
That must and shall endure.

At ev'ry time, in ev'ry place,
In safeguard thou shalt be,
And find my everlasting grace
Sufficient still for thee.'

Jesus, assist us to believe,
For slow of heart are we,
Grace from thy fulness to receive,
And thus to honour thee."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHEER FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."—Judges xiii. 23.

FAITH is not only the door by which we enter into the way of salvation, as it is written, "He hath opened the door of faith unto the gentiles;" but it likewise describes the entire path of Christian pilgrimage, "that we also walk in the steps of that faith." We are not only quickened by faith at the outset of our spiritual career, but we are supported and sustained thereby in all our subsequent experience—"the just shall *live* by faith." As it is by faith that we come out from the world and begin to tread the heavenly road, so it must be by faith that we walk all the journey through. Till we this veil of flesh lay down, till the angel of death shall rend the curtain and we shall see face to face, let us not hope to walk by sight or sense, but only by faith in the living God. A life of faith is always very singular; often it seems very foolish to the carnal man. The man who acts by faith often acts imprudently to the eyes of the world; he appears unbusiness-like, because he observes not the maxims of his times, but holds fast by those statutes which God has given us for all time. Faith and patience often encourage a man to go the very way that caution and prudence would tell him not to go. And not unfrequently those who are weak in the faith will hold up their hands with astonishment, even if they do not speak with some degree of indignation, at the daring way in which the man strong in faith challenges

the promise of God, and acts as if he believed it to be quite as true as though it were already fulfilled. You know little, my brothers and sisters, of what it is to walk by faith, if you do not find it to be a way that you know not, and a path which you have not seen. We saw the last step not until we had taken it, but the foundation on which faith is to put its foot for the next we cannot see. We do, as it were, tread on clouds and find them firm; we put our feet on mists and find them adamant beneath our feet. Happy is that man who, stedfast, upright, cheerful, goes from strength to strength, believing his God! Trusting in his God, he knows no care; resting in his God, he knows no impossibility.

But, it seems from our text, that we have one or two lessons to learn. And the first is, that the strongest faith has its seasons of wavering. Even Abraham, "the father of the faithful," had his seasons of distrust, when expediency rather than integrity prompted him. Most of those eminent saints, who are mentioned in Scripture as exhibiting faith in its greatness, appear to have sometimes shewed the white flag of unbelief. There may have lived—I will not dare to say to the contrary—there may have lived some man who did never once doubt his God; but I think I have never had the privilege of putting my eyes upon him. There may be, and I hope there are, some Christians who through their whole career never doubted their interest in Christ, and who never had to say,—

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought,
> Do I love the Lord or no,
> Am I his, or am I not?"

But, I must say, I think such brethren are few. I think you might travel far before you should meet with any. God forbid I should speak lightly of unbelief! It is the most damnable of sins. God forbid I should say a word in its favour, or encourage its propagation. There cannot be a greater villainy out of hell than the doubting the promise of God. There cannot be a greater act of treason than to mistrust the love, the faith, the tenderness, the truth of the God who has helped us hitherto; but still the confession must be made, humiliating though it be,—we do know that even those believers whose hearts are true, and whose souls are clad in the panoply of heaven, do yet sometimes find their loins loose, and their strength fail them. Mr. Pilgrim thought Mr. Greatheart never had a doubt. And so is it with some of our hearers.

They fancy that their pastors certainly never have any trials as to their union with Christ; they can always read their titles clear. Ah, beloved, but if you should ask those men, they might say with Elijah, "I am not better than my fathers." There are times when the high-soaring eagle droops to the earth; and when he who could scale the stars has to lay flat upon his face in dust and ashes, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These reflections are illustrated by the narrative of our text. Manoah certainly was strong in faith. He did not even see the angel, but he believed,—"Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet hath believed,"—and when he intreated that he might see the angel, there seemed to be more curiosity than wavering in his faith. He believed God, and no doubt, settled in his own mind that he would be obedient to the heavenly vision. Yet even he begins to entertain misgivings when he says, "We shall surely die, for we have seen an angel of the Lord." Good Lord! of what small account are the best of men apart from thee! How high they go when thou liftest them up! How low they fall if thou withdraw thine hand! 'Tis our joy amidst distress when thou enablest us to say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" but if thou take away thy Spirit, we cannot even trust thee in the brightest day. When storms gather around us, we can laugh at them if thou be with us; but in the fairest morn that ever glowed on human heart, we doubt and we miscarry if thou be not with us still, to preserve and strengthen the faith which thou hast thyself bestowed.

Dwelling no longer, however, upon that very humiliating truth, we come to make a second observation. We have observed that some of these greatest aberrations of faith have occurred just after the brightest seasons of enjoyment. Some of us have learned to be afraid of joy. Sadness is often the herald of satisfaction; but bliss is ofttimes the harbinger of pain. Whether it is that God provides for our struggle by giving us an extraordinary banquet before a season of long fasting, so that like Elijah, we may go forty days in the strength of this marvellous meat; or whether it is that he cures us of the dangers of surfeit by sending us on long journeys after we have had high feastings, I cannot say, but so it is. How strangely is it related of our Lord! He went into the Jordan of his baptism; the Spirit descended upon him like a dove; the Father's voice saluted him, "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." What next? "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness: and he was there in the wilderness forty days

tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts." John Bunyan, with great wisdom, puts the palace Beautiful first, and then no sooner does Christian get out of the Palace gates, than he begins to descend into the Valley of Humiliation. They had given him a sword, and a shield, and a helmet. He had never had those before. Now that he had his sword, he found that he had to use it against Apollyon; now that he had his shield, he had to hold it up to catch the fiery dart; now that he had received the weapon of "All prayer," he found that he had need of it as he walked through that desperate place, the Valley of the Shadow of Death. God does not give his people weapons to play with; he does not give them strength to spend on their lusts. Lord, if thou hast given me these goodly weapons, it is sure I shall need them in hard fighting. If I have had a feast at thy table, I will remember that it is but a short walk from the upper chamber to the garden of Gethsemane. Daniel, the man greatly beloved, was reduced very low. "All his comeliness was turned into corruption and he retained no strength," when God shewed him "the great vision." Thus, too, with favoured John, he must be banished to Patmos; in the deep solitude of that Ægean sea-girt island he must receive "the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him." I have noticed, in the ordinary scenes of Christian experience, that our greatest joys come just after some of our sorest trials. When the howling tempest has played out its strength, it soothes itself to sleep. Then comes a season of calm and quiet, so profound in its stillness, that only the monstrous tempest could have been the mother of so mighty a calm. So seems it with us. Deep waves of trial, high mountains of joy; but the reverse is almost as often true: from Pisgah's top we go to our graves; from the top of Carmel we have to go down to the dens of lions, and to fight with the leopards. Let us be on our watch-tower, lest like Manoah, having seen the angel of God, the next thing should be that we say we shall surely die, for we have seen the Lord.

It seems very plain from our text that it is a very happy thing if, when one believer's down, there is another near to lift him up. In this case Manoah found in his wife a help-meet. It is said by old Master Henry Smith that there is many a man who has had his head broken with his own rib; but there is many a man who has had his heart cured in the same way. So, in this case, if wife and husband had both been down at one time, they might have been long in getting up. But seeing

that when he fell she was there strong in faith to give him a helping hand, it was but a slight fall, and they went on their way rejoicing. If one shall fall, then his brother shall help him up. What is the lesson here? Why, perhaps some of you have got such strong faith to-night that you hardly know what to do with it. What should you do? If there was some person fainting in the seat behind you, and you had some strong smelling salts, you would pass them over. Now sometimes our faith is intended to be as a bottle to be put to the nostril of other fainting souls. If thou art strong, help thy weak brother. If thou seest any bowed down, take them on thy shoulders, help to carry them. Doth not thy Master carry the lambs in his bosom? Imitate him, and sometimes carry a lamb in thy bosom too. It is a divine thing to wipe tears from all eyes: perhaps thy faith is meant to be a handkerchief with which thou mayest wipe away the tears of thy brother. But you say, "Where are the ones low in faith just now?" Wife, perhaps it is thy husband! Husband, perhaps it is thy wife! It may be, daughter, thine aged mother. Brother, may be 'tis thy brother; perhaps the very person who sits next to thee in the pew, who may be at this time saying, "I walk in darkness and I see no light." Speak thou, speak thou wisely, fervently, affectionately, out of the fulness of thy soul, and who can tell?—He who said twice, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem," may make you to be a Barnabas, a son of Consolation to those who are weary and ready to die. Is it not the duty of Christians to strengthen the weak hands and to confirm the feeble knees? Do not follow the way of the world. It is always, if a man is going down, "Down with him; the moment he begins to reel, give him a push; send him over at once." And it is so with some coarse-minded professors. If they see a brother a little faint, they tell him something frightful—something about the dragons and the lions, or the giants that are in the road. Instead of that, my brother, help to prop up thy reeling friend for a little season, and it may be that in some brighter day with him, when thy dark hour shall come, he will repay with a mighty interest the little cheer which thou givest to him to-day. It is a good thing, however, to temper kindness with wisdom. You know Manoah's wife did not say, when she found that she knew more than her husband did, "Why how silly you must be! What a stupid man to be frightened like this!" She did not begin, as I know some Christians would do who are stronger in faith than the

weak ones, by scolding about the matter: but no, she used soft liniment for smarting wounds. She knew that it does not do to put stinging-nettles to a cut, and therefore she put soft salve where there had been a very deep wound. Let us do the same. It is time to talk of duty to a brother when you get him out of the ditch; but when you see a man down, I would hardly talk to him about the sin of tumbling in, but pull him out first and brush him clean, and then afterwards tell him to take heed that he fall not there again. I have sometimes had lessons given me about unbelief, when they were not, I think, very profitable. There should be a timeliness about our advice, and if we see a man in Manoah's plight, afraid of dying, we should use the discretion of Manoah's wife, and encourage and cheer his heart.

The text seems to me to suggest certain consolations which ought to be laid hold of by believers in Christ in their time of sore trouble. Let me speak to any Christian present to-night who has a trouble,—we will suppose it temporal trouble.

"These are hard times!" Times have always been hard ever since I recollect them, and I suppose they ever will be, for they used to be hard in our grandfathers' days, and there seems to be no likelihood but what they will continue to be so. Yet we always talk of "the good old times," and when our children succeed us, they will speak about our times as being "the good old times" too. The fact is, the present time is the best time that ever was, and "now" is the only time that belongs to us, for the past is gone and the future is not come. The present is what we have got in hand; let us make the right use of it. But you have had losses, and crosses, and disappointments. You are chastened every morning, and you are troubled all day long, and Satan whispered to you last Saturday-night, when you were putting-up the shutters as tired as you could be, "It is no use going to the house of God to-morrow. There is nothing there for you. God has been troubling you all the week; he means to destroy you; he is going to give you up: you may do what you will, but the current is too strong; you may tug and pull, but you will starve for all that. God has forsaken you, and your enemies are persecuting you on every side." Well, now, it would be a very curious thing if it were true; but it is not true, for the reasons which Manoah's wife gave.

Recollect, first, the Lord has in your case accepted a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at your hand. You know that when your faith laid

hold of Christ, God did not spurn the sacrifice you brought. When you said, for the first time in your life,—

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin,"

he did not reject the offering which you then presented to him, but he spoke with loving voice and said, "Go, and sin no more. Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." Since that time you have brought the meat-offering of your prayers, and they have been heard, you have had answers of peace. In looking back upon the past, you can remember many times and seasons when God has especially answered you as though he would rend the heavens and put out his right hand full of the mercies which you needed. Now, would the Lord have heard you? Above all, would he have accepted Christ for you? Would he have accepted your faith and saved you in Christ, if he had meant to destroy you? What! can you trust him with your soul, and not trust him with your shop? Can you leave eternity with him, and not leave time? What! trust the immortal spirit, and not this poor decaying, mouldering, flesh and blood? Man! shame on thee. If the Lord had meant thee to die, he would not have accepted the offering at thy hand. But, you say, he will forsake you in this trouble. Remember what things he has shown to you. See how Manoah's wife said, "Would he have shown us such things as these?" Why, what has your past life been? Has not it been a wonder? You have been in as bad a plight as you are in to-night scores of times, and you have got out of it. "There is a big wave coming over my head;" ay, but there have been fifty waves as big as that which have passed over your head without drowning you, and this will not. "It is a deep river I have to ford." Ah, but ye have waded through as deep streams as that, and ye have not been drowned. Besides, remember how he showed you his love in a strange city, and his faithfulness, perhaps, in a far-off land. When there was none to comfort you, and none to help you, his own right hand defended you, and his right hand brought salvation to you. I can say joyfully and cheerfully:—

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my side has always stood,
His lovingkindness, O how good!"

And I often think myself the biggest fool in the world for ever daring to doubt my God again after such singular interpositions both of providence and grace as you and I have seen in this Church and in the midst of this congregation. If he had meant to destroy us, would he have shewn us such things as we have seen? After such kindness in the past, will he let us sink at last? God forbid!

Besides this, Manoah's wife gave a third reason, "Nor would he at this time have told us such things as these." He meant that he would not have given them such prophecies of the future as he had done, if he meant to kill them. It stood to reason, she seemed to say, "If I am to bear a son, we are not going to die." And so, remember, God has made one or two promises which are true, and if they be true, it stands to reason he won't leave you. Let us have one of them. "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." Then, as you are to have every good thing, you must have it; it is absolutely certain that God is not going to leave you without good things now. Or take another, "When thou goest through the rivers I will be with thee, and through the floods they shall not overflow thee." Mark that! It is certain that God will not permit the floods to overflow you. Then it stands to reason that you cannot be drowned. It is a good thing for a Christian who is much tried in business, to carry his cheque book in his pocket, but mark what kind of cheque book I mean. Get a copy of "Clarke's Precious Promises." They are the promises collated from Scripture put under the different heads. I generally have kept a copy in my pocket, so that when I have had a trouble of a particular sort, I could turn to the head under which my trouble would come, and I never turned there without finding a promise to meet it. Or whenever your trial comes, go home to your Bible, open it, ask the Lord to direct you, and with a little search I think you will soon find a promise that was made on purpose for you. It may have suited twenty cases before, but you can only say if an angel had come down from heaven to bring a message precisely adapted to your peculiar trial, it could not have been better worded, the arrow could not have hit the centre of the mark more surely than it has. Well, then, if the Lord hath meant to destroy you, would he have given you that promise? Would he thus have deluded you? Oh, this be far from him! Let the fact that he has accepted Christ for you, that he has already shown you so much favour, and that he has given you such precious promises,

let these, I say, lead you to think that he will not destroy you, he will not leave you.

But we will suppose for a moment, in the next place, that you are in some spiritual trouble. "Oh," say you, "this is worse than temporal trial," and indeed it is. Touch a man in his house, and he can bear it; touch him in his children, and he may bear that, but touch him in his bone and in his flesh, nay, go farther, touch him in his soul, and in his faith, and then it is hard to lay hold on God, and trust him still. The enemy had thrust sore at Manoah to vex him, and make him fret. There may be some here whose spiritual enemy has set upon them dreadfully of late, and he has been howling in your ears, "It's all over with you; you are cast off, God has rejected you; you are twicé dead, plucked up by the roots, you are wandering stars, you are clouds without rain, you are one of those that knew the way of righteousness, but have turned away from it, you have gone back to your old sin; God has cursed you, like Esau he has rejected you; you have sold your portion for a mess of pottage, and you are cast out for ever." Nay, soul, thus saith the Lord to thee, "Was there not a time when Christ was precious to you?" O backslider, was there not a season when thou couldst put thy finger into the prints of the nails, and thy hand into his side? Poor fallen soul, was there not a period when that precious hymn of Toplady's was sweet to thine ears?—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, look to thee for dress,
Helpless, come to thee for grace;
Black I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Then I tell thee, soul, if the Lord had ever meant to destroy thee, he would never have permitted thee to know a precious Christ, or to put thy trust in him. Besides, fallen though you now are, through sore travail, yet was there not a time when you saw the beauty of God in his temple? I went to the house of God with the company that kept holyday; his name to me was as ointment poured forth. My soul delighted herself in her God, and my spirit made her boast in her King. O Jesus, once thou wast very sweet to me. I knew the plague of my own heart

even then, but I knew thy power to save, I knew the fellowship of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ.

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill."

Our soul! what a mercy it is that the world cannot fill it, and what a greater mercy still that God will fill it, for he never emptied a soul he did not mean to fill, he never stripped a man he did not mean to clothe, he never made one a spiritual beggar without intending to make him spiritually rich, and if you, to-night, are brought to the first stage of desperation, you are brought to the first stage of hope. Now that man comes to his wit's end, God shall begin to magnify his mercy and his truth.

To conclude the argument of Manaoh's wife, what promises God has made even to you! What has he said of his people? "I will surely bring them in." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." And what does Christ say again?—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." But turn to that Book for yourself. See the promises made to the soul that ever did believe in Christ, and you may say once for all, "If he had meant to destroy me he would not have made such promises as these; if he meant to desert me in spiritual trouble he would never have brought me thus far." To the Christian who is near his death, I commend this text, to the grey-headed tottering saint, to the consumptive girl, whose cheeks betray the worm within, to you who are going down the steep decline, and whose feet begin to chill with the waters of the black river. He has accepted Christ at your hands, be not afraid to die. He has showed you the riches of his faithfulness hitherto; trust him for the rest. He is engaged by covenant, yea, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, to bring you to heaven, do not doubt, but boldly ford the stream, for in its deepest parts you shall feel the bottom. Thus boldly live and boldly dare to die, for when thou goest through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with thee, his rod and his staff shall comfort thee.

Now it may happen to-night that I have some young Christians here, who have only during the last week or two been converted to God, and they have been falling during the last two three days into the Slough of Despond. I hope this sermon may help them out, for of you is it true that if you have laid hold of Christ he would not have enabled you to do that, if he meant to leave you; if you have been shown the evil of your own heart, he would not have shown you that if he meant to destroy you; and if he has caused you to lean upon any promise, depend upon it he will give you that promise, and fulfil it in your experience. He will save you. I think about five days after I first found Christ, when my joy had been such that I could have danced for very mirth at the thought that Christ was mine, on a sudden I fell into a sad fit of despondency. I will tell you why. When I first believed in Christ, I am not sure that I thought the devil was dead, but certainly I had a kind of notion that he was so mortally wounded he could not disturb me. And then I certainly fancied that the corruption of my nature had received its death blow. I read what Cowper said—

> "Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
> And cut up all my follies by the root."

And I really thought that Cowper knew what he was saying; whereas, never did any poet blunder so terribly as Cowper did when he said that, for no man, I think, has got his follies cut up by the roots yet. However, I fondly dreamed mine were, I felt persuaded that they would never sprout again. I was going to be perfect—I fully calculated upon it—and lo, I found an intruder I had not reckoned upon, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. So I went to that same Primitive Methodist Chapel where I first received peace with God, through the simple preaching of the Word. The text happened to be "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "There," I thought "that's a text for me." I had got as far as that—in the middle of that very sentiment—when the minister began by saying, "Paul was not a believer when he said this." Well now I knew I was a believer, and it seemed to me from the context that Paul must have been a believer too. Now I am sure he was. The man went on to say, that no child of God even did feel any conflict within. So I took up my hat and left the place, and I do not think I have frequented such places since. They are very

good for people who are unconverted to go to, but of very little use for children of God. That is my notion of Methodism. It is a noble thing to bring in strangers; but a terrible thing for those that are brought in to sit and feed there. It is like the parish pound, it is a good thing to put sheep in when they are strayed, but there is no food inside; they had better be let out as soon as possible to find real food for the soul. I knew that that man understood nothing of experimental divinity, or of practical heart theology, or else he would not have talked so. A good man he was I do not doubt, but utterly incompetent to the task of dealing with a case like that. Then we say to you to-night, who are in such a case, we are not at all surprised; this is just where God's people generally come soon after conversion. If they get over that Slough of Despond, they may go on merrily for a long way,—years perhaps—certainly for whole miles, as Mr. Bunyan says that, when Christian got out of that Slough, he went for a long distance along a high road within walls—called the Walls of Salvation—and so it is. Once get over that, that first season of spiritual depression, which is partly caused by the excessive exhilaration of our mental frame after conversion, and we shall go on readily enough, rejoicing in God. Be not troubled, young Christian, about this matter; go thou again to Christ; put thy trust in him anew; go once more as a poor lost sinner, and take Jesus to be thy all in all; cast thyself flat on thy face again before his cross; go thou and wash anew in the fountain filled with blood; let thine espousals come over again, and then the joy of thy espousals shall come again too; and so, God keep thee, and God bless thee, that the Evil One touch thee not. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall he damned." Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. May God give his blessing for the Saviour's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ELDERS BEFORE THE THRONE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 23RD, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

"The four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—

Revelations iv. 4; 10, 11.

THE universe of God is one; heaven and earth are not so separate as unbelief has dreamed. As the Lord hath but one family, written in one register, redeemed with one blood, quickened by one Spirit, so this whole household abides in one habitation evermore. We who are in the body abide in the lower room which is sometimes dark and cold, but bears sufficient marks that it is a room in God's house; for it is to the eye of our faith often lit up with heavenly lustre, and we, even we, while we are yet here, are by blessed earnests made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is the same house, I say; but ours is the lower room, while our glorified brethren are up there, in the upper story, where the sunlight streams in everlastingly, where no chilling winds or poisonous breath can ever reach. It was well said that God's great house seems to have two wings; the one was a hospital and the other a palace. We are as yet in the wing on the left hand side, which is the hospital. We came into it sick even unto death, leprous to our very core, polluted from head to foot, having no soundness in us anywhere; and in this hospital we are undergoing the process of cure—a cure which is already certain, which is soon to be perfected; and then we shall pass from the hospital, the lazar-house, into the palace, where "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," we shall be recognised as the aristocracy of God, princes of the blood-royal of the universe, "sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." Still is it but one building: one roof covers the whole, both lazar-house and palace; one family, we dwell in it—one Church, above, beneath, though now divided by the narrow partition of death.

Now, to a great extent there is a likeness between the lower room and the upper room. As on earth we prepare for heaven, so the state

of the saints on earth is heaven foreshadowed. In many respects the condition of the child of God on earth is a type of his condition in heaven; and I may say without fear of question that what the character of the saints is above, that should be the character of the saints below. We may very safely take for our example those glorified spirits. We need not be afraid that we shall be led astray by imitating them, by learning their occupations, or by attempting to share their joys. Surely the things in heaven are patterns of the things on earth, and as *they* are before the throne so ought we to be, and so shall we be in proportion as we live up to our privileges, and receive the likeness and image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, beloved, it is upon this subject that I want to speak this morning. God is making heaven very near to us. We are now so large a Church that according to the laws of mortality, we lose five or six every month by death, and frequently two or three are removed in a week. We can hardly hope to meet together upon a single Sabbath without hearing that another of the stars is set. Some little time ago we went to the grave with an excellent elder of our Church, who had long known the Master, and had served him well: and now, during the coming week, it will be our lot to perform the same mournful office for another brother who has been in Christ, I suppose, these forty or fifty years, and who has served this Church for some little time with industry and zeal, but this week has been removed from our midst to join "the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven." The veil grows thinner and thinner, and our faith in the unseen grows stronger. As the advanced guard of the army wade through the stream, and we hear their triumphant shouts upon the other shore, this world fades away, and that better land stands out in stronger and more glorious reality than it did before. Come, let us talk to one another by the way this morning of that better land, and let us encourage each other's hearts to make ourselves through God such as *they* are who sit upon their thrones, and to make *this* land, through the Spirit, such as that land is where God sheds his light for ever.

With regard to the spirits before the throne, we shall have three things to say this morning. First, a little *concerning their state and enjoyments;* then, further, concerning *their occupations and spirit;* and a few words with regard to *their testimony and precepts to us, as, speaking from the upper spheres, they urge us to follow their example.*

I. First, then, brethren, with regard to THE STATE AND ENJOYMENTS OF THE SPIRITS BEFORE THE THRONE. In John's vision you perceive that the Church of Christ is represented by the four-and-twenty elders who sat round the throne. We are to look upon them as being the representatives of the great body of the faithful gathered to their eternal rest.

Mark, then, in the first place, that the saints in heaven are represented as "*elders,*" which we take to refer not merely to the office of the eldership, as it is exercised among us, although it seems most fitting that the officers should be the representatives of the whole body, but the reference is rather to the fulness of growth of believers before the throne. Here we have elders, and those who are elders in office should be chosen, because they have had spiritual experience, are well taught

in the things of the kingdom of heaven, and are therefore elders by grace as well as elders by office; but in all our Churches we have many who are babes in Christ, who as yet can only receive the elements of the gospel. We have many others who are young men, strong, but not matured. They have the vigour of manhood, but they have not yet the ripeness of advanced age. The elders in the Church are those who by reason of years have had their senses exercised; they are not the saplings of the forest, but the well-rooted trees; they are not the blades of corn up-springing, but the full corn in the ear awaiting the reaper's sickle. Such are the saints before the throne. They have made wondrous strides in knowledge; they understand now the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ, which still surpasses even *their* knowledge. The meanest, if there be such differences, the meanest of the glorified understands more of the things of God than the greatest divine on earth. The rending of the veil of death is the removal of much of our ignorance. It may be that the saints in heaven progress in knowledge—that is possible, but it is certain that at the time of their departure they made a wondrous spring; they are babes no longer; they are children and infant beginners no more; God teacheth them in one five minutes, by a sight of the face of Jesus, more than they could have learned in threescore years and ten while present in the body and absent from the Lord. Their heresies are all cleared away with their sins; their mistakes are all removed; the same hand which wipes away all tears from their eyes wipes away all motes from their eyes too. Then they become sound in doctrine, skilful in teaching; they become masters in Israel by the sudden infusion of the wisdom of God by the Holy Ghost. They are "elders" before the throne. They are not unripe corn gathered green and damp, but they are all fully ripe, and they come to the garner as shocks of corn come in their season.

Perhaps they are represented as elders to show the dignity and gravity which shall surround saints of God in heaven. We sometimes hear complaints made about the younger members of Churches, that they are somewhat light in their conversation. Well, this has always been the fault of young people, and, as I said the other day, when one complained, *I* could not make lambs into sheep, and while they were lambs I suppose they would show some playfulness. It seems to be the natural failing of young people to be overflowing with mirth, and sometimes overtaken with levity. But there is a gravity which is very becoming in Christians, and there is a solidity which is extremely comely in the young believer; and I think when we make a profession of our faith in Christ, though we are not to cast away our cheerful faces, but to be more happy than ever we were before, yet we must put away all unseemly levity, and walk as those who are looking for the coming of the Son of Man, hearing this voice in our ears, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" Now that fault can never be brought against the Church of God before the throne; there they are elders, glorious, blissful, happy, but yet serene and majestic in their joy. Theirs is not the prattling joy of the child, but the deep silent bliss of the full-grown man. As the senators in the Roman senate sat down in solemn grandeur,

so that even the invading barbarians were overawed by their majestic bearing, so let our holy tranquility and joyful serenity cast an influence over the foes of our religion. Look upwards, Christians. There are the elders before the throne, representatives of what you and I, and all of us who trust in Christ, shall soon be; let us be laying aside childish things; let us be getting ready for the elders' dignity; let us leave the toy, the trifle, the plaything, to those who know not the immortal manhood of believers, and let us go on unto perfection, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In passing, I may observe, that the number of *four-and-twenty* is somewhat puzzling. There have been different attempts made to account for it. They say that this was the number of the Sanhedrim; but that is not clear. Others think that as the number twelve was the symbol of the Jewish Church, in the twelve tribes, so twelve more may have been added to represent the accession of the Gentile Church; or it may show the multiplication of the Church, that though small, so that it is numbered by twelve, its number, while still definite and complete, is now larger than it was before. But, still better, I think, as there were twenty-four courses of Levites, who were porters at the gate of the temple, and twenty-four courses of priests who offered sacrifice, so the number twenty-four is made use of to show that the service of God in his temple is complete, that there are as many as will be wanted, that every part of the divine service will be taken up, and around that altar which smokes before God eternally there shall be a full complement of those who shall bow before him, and do him homage.

2. But, secondly, you will notice that these elders are said to be *around the throne*. We suppose, as near as we can catch the thought of John, sitting in a semi-circle, as the Jewish Sanhedrim did around the Prince of Israel. It is a somewhat singular thing that in the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the king sitting at his table, the Hebrew has it "a round table." From this, some expositors, I think without straining the text, have said, "There is an equality among the saints." In heaven they are not some sitting at the head, and some sitting lower down, but there is an equality in the position and condition of glorified spirits. Certainly that idea is conveyed by the position of the four-and-twenty elders. We do not find one of them nearer than the other, but they all sat round about the throne. We believe, then, that the condition of glorified spirits in heaven, is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of his glory, constant access to his court, and familiar fellowship with his person. Nor do we think that there is any difference before the throne between one saint and another. We believe that all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all have the same place *near the throne*, where they shall for ever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and for ever be satisfied in his love. There shall not be some at a distance, far away in the remote streets of the celestial city, and others in the broad thoroughfares; there shall not be some near the centre, and others far away on the verge of the wide circumference; but they shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with his love, all eating and drinking at the same table with him, as equally his favourites and his friends.

Now, brothers and sisters, as we bade you imitate the saints in their eldership and perfection, so would we exhort you to imitate them in their nearness to Christ. Oh, let us be on earth as the elders are in heaven, sitting round about the throne. May Christ be the centre of this Church! May he be the centre of your thoughts, the centre of your life. If an angel should fly across this assembly this morning, when he came back to heaven, could he say, "I saw them in the house of God, sitting around the throne. Their eyes were gazing on the slaughtered Lamb; their hearts were loving and praising *him*; they were desiring to do *him* homage and to pay *him* reverence?" And what think you of to-morrow, and the other days of the week? Will it be true of you that you are sitting before the throne? Brothers and sisters, we are out of our proper place, when we are looking after anything but Christ. "We are not our own; we are bought with a price." Why live as if we were our own? He is our husband, our soul is espoused to him. Oh! how can we live at such a distance from him? He is our life; he makes us live, he makes us blest: how can we be so much forgetful of him? How can our hearts be such strangers to their beloved? Jesu! draw us nearer to thyself! Oh to be nearer to thy throne, Lord, even while we are here! O take thou us up to thee, or else come thou down to us. Say unto us, "Abide in me, and I in you;" and permit our souls to say, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without thee I dare not die."

3. A third point of likeness strikes us at once. It seems that the elders sitting around the throne were represented to the illuminated eye of John as "*clothed in white raiment.*" Not in raiment of party-colors, whereon there were some spots, and yet some signs of whiteness. They are without fault before the throne of God; they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and the Spirit of God also has so thoroughly renewed them, that they are "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" they have been presented holy and unblamable before the throne of God. Brothers and sisters, in this too, they are an example to us. Oh that the Spirit of God might keep the members of this Church, that our garments might be always white. Perfection we must not hope to see here; but oh, we must aim after it. If one should never unite with a Christian Church till he found one which is perfect and free from all fault, then such a man must be a schismatic for ever, for with no Christian people could he ever join. Yet, this is what we aspire unto—to be faultless before God. We desire so to walk, and so to act among men, that our conduct may never bring a slur upon our profession—that our language, our actions, our motives, everything that is about us, may witness to the fact that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. O brothers and sisters, it is impossible for one pastor, assisted even by the most earnest of elders, to oversee so large a flock as this. Let me ask, have you kept

your garments white this last week? Oh, if you have stained them, I beseech you, repent, bitterly repent before God; and if any of you have backslidden, I pray you, do not be hypocrites; let your guilt be fully confessed before God. If you cannot honour this Church, do not dishonour it; if you cannot glorify Christ by your walk and conversation, at least do not trample under foot his blood, and put his cross to an open shame. There is nothing which can so injure a Church, and cut the sinews of its strength, as the unholiness of its members. When we are "fair as the moon, and clear as the sun," then we shall be "terrible as an army with banners;" but not till then. Those blots upon the escutcheon, those spots upon the garment, are soon perceived by a lynx-eyed world; and then they turn round and say, "Ah! these are your Christians; this is your religion!" The sons of Belial make excuses for their own conscience, and go on in their sin, hardened by our mistakes. Oh, let this be your prayer, I exhort you, you who are mighty in prayer, never forget this day and night, "Lord, keep thy people; hold thou them up." I can say it has been at all times the bitterest draught I have ever had to drink, when any who have professed the name of Christ have turned back unto vanity. To bury you is but a blessed duty in comparison with noting and correcting backsliding and apostacy. I know my prayer for myself has been, a hundred times, "A speedy death, a soon and sudden sleeping beneath the green turf, or even a painful, agonizing, languishing decay, upon a bed of pain, rather than you should live to see your pastor stain his profession, and fall from his integrity." If it be so with the minister, it must be so with each of you. Better for you that you depart at once than that you should live bearing the name of Christ, to make that name a reproach and a bye-word among the heathen. Lord, help thou us, that we, like thy saints above, may be clothed in white garments.

4. Further, to carry on the parallel. You perceive that these elders *exercised a priesthood.* Indeed, their being clothed in white garments, while it is an emblem of their purity, also represents them as being priests unto God. They themselves expressly sing in the 10th verse of the 5th chapter, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests." They exercise the office of the priesthood, as you perceive, by the double offering of prayer and praise. They hold in their hands the censers full of sweet incense, and the harps which give forth melodious sounds. Brethren, in the wilderness of old they were not all priests. One special tribe, and one family out of that tribe, alone could exercise that office; the rest of the people stood in the outer court. As for the most holy place, into that only came the high priest, and he only once a year, so much exclusion was there in that age of shadows. But now all believers are priests; we have all a right to stand in the priest's place, to offer sacrifice and incense. Nay, more, through Christ we enter into that which is within the veil, and stand in the most holy place, and look at the bright light from the Shekinah, fearing not that we shall die, but having boldness and confidence through the new and living way, the rent body of Christ. The saints before the throne are represented as all of them in the holy place, round the throne, all officiating, every one of them presenting sacrifice. Brethren, what are *we* doing? Let us look up to them as the priests of God,

and then ask ourselves, are *we* celebrating his worship too? Brother, did you this morning, before you came up to this house, lift up your hand with the bowl of incense in it, in your earnest prayer for a blessing upon his people? Have you this day in our sacred song, been laying your fingers mystically among the strings of your golden harp? What did you do last week, my brethren? What *were* you? Can you say that you were a priest? Or, must you not blush that you were rather a buyer and a seller, or a thinker and a writer, than a priest unto our God? And yet this is our high calling; this is our blessed vocation. Our earthly calling is but little honour to us, nor should it engross our richest thoughts; our heavenly calling is of the most importance; it is that which is to last for ever; it is that which should have the cream of our soul's attention. We are priests. Oh! brethren, if we have failed in the past, may God give us grace for the future! and during the coming days of the next work-day week, may he help us, that our buyings and our sellings, our travellings and our tarryings at home, may all be the exercise of priesthood! You know, you can make "the bells upon the horses" holiness to the Lord, and the very pots of your house can be as the bowls upon the altar; you need not go out of your everyday callings to be priests, but be priests in your callings. Sanctify the Lord God in your workshops, in your fields, in your market-places, in your exchanges; and whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, who hath made you priests and kings unto him.

I know there is a sad tendency among us all to leave the priesthood to some peculiar clan. Mark you, members of this Church, I will be no priest for you. It is as much as I can do to exercise the priesthood to which God calls me on my own account, to offer my own thanks and my own petitions. I will have none of your responsibilities; you must be priests for yourselves. You cannot shift this burden off, nor would you wish, I am sure, if ye be true-hearted. Ye say ye are poor, ye are unknown, ye have no talent. Ye need it not, these cannot make you priests. How came the sons of Aaron to the priesthood? By birth. So with you. You have been "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, but of God," and the priesthood is the inalienable inheritance of the new birth. Exercise your office, then, be ye who ye may, O ye beloved of the Lord. In the name of him who hath "begotten you again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, live as men sanctified for divine service, who cannot and must not be servants of men and slaves of sin.

5. Once more, and I think I shall have said enough upon this first point. There is yet another likeness between the saints in heaven and those on earth. You perceive that these *had on their heads crowns of gold.* They reigned with Christ. He was a king, and he made them kings with him. As in the old Persian court the princes of the blood wore crowns, so in the court of heaven the princes of the blood, the brethren of the Lord, are crowned too. They are royal senators; they sit upon thrones, even as he has overcome, and sits down with his Father on his throne. These thrones they have to show their dominion, their rights and jurisdiction. Know ye not that we shall judge angels, and that when

Christ shall come he will bring his people with him, and they will sit upon his throne as co-assessors with him? Then the wicked, the persecutors, the revilers of God's people, shall be brought to judgment, and the saints whom they despised shall be their Judges? So that when Christ shall say, "Depart, ye cursed," there shall be heard the thundering assent of the ten thousands of his saints, as they say "Amen," and confirm from their hearts the sentence of the all-righteous Judge. Therefore do these elders sit upon their thrones.

Now, beloved, let us imitate them in this. "Oh!" say you, "but I cannot wear a crown as they do." Nevertheless, you are a king; for they who are Christ's are kings. Take care, brother, that thou wearest thy crown, by reigning over thy lusts. Reign over thy sins. Reign over thy passions. Be as a king in the midst of all that would lead thee astray. Christ Jesus has broken the neck of thy sin; put thy foot upon it; keep it under; subdue it. Be king in the dominions of thine own being. In the world at large act a king's part. If any would tempt thee to betray Christ for gain, say, "How can I? I am a king. How shall I betray Christ?" Let the nobility of your nature come out in your actings. Forgive in a royal manner, as a king can forgive. Be ready to give to others as God hath helped you, as a king gives. Let your liberality of spirit be right royal. Let your actions never be mean, sneaking, cowardly, dastardly. Do the right thing, and defy the worst. Dare all your foes in the pursuit of that which is right, and let men see while they look upon you that there is a something under your homely appearance which they cannot understand. Men make a deal of fuss about the blood of the aristocracy; I dare say it is not very different from the blood of crossing-sweepers. But there is a great deal of difference between the life-blood of the saints and the life-blood of the proudest prince; for they who love Christ have fed upon his flesh, and have drunk of his blood, and have been made partakers of the divine nature. These are the royal ones; these are the aristocrats; these are the nobility, and all are mean beside. Christians, perhaps some of you have not reigned as kings during the last week. You have been either murmuring, like poor whining beggars, or you have been scraping, like dunghill rakers, with your covetousness, or you have been sinning, like idle boys in the street, who roll in the mire. You have not lived up to your kingship. Now I pray you, ask God's grace that during the week to come you may say of sin, "I cannot touch it, I am a king; I cannot demean myself with it;" that you may say of this earth's dross, "I cannot go down and scrape that; my heritage is above;" that ye may be able to say of everything that is low and mean, "Shall such a man as I do this? How can I come down from the elevated position to which God has called me, to act as others act, from their motives and with their ends?" Let, then, the state of the saints above, while it is the theme of our delightful thought, while we anticipate the time when we shall fully partake of it, be also an example to us while in these lands below.

II. Briefly upon our second point—THE OCCUPATION AND SPIRIT OF THOSE GLORIFIED ONES, AS THEY SHOULD BE IMITATED BY US BELOW.

1. Notice their occupation. First of all it is one of *humility*. At the tenth verse in our fourth chapter we perceive it is written, "They fall down before him." They are kings, but yet they fall down—they wear

royal crowns, but yet they prostrate themselves. They are second to none in God's universe; they stand as first in the peerage of creation; yet before the king they have no honour and no esteem, but as if they were slaves and menials, they cast themselves upon their faces before his throne, having nothing of their own whereof to glory, but boasting alone in Him. The more holy, the more humble. Where holiness is in perfection, there humility is in perfection too. The cherubim veil their faces with their wings, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth." So do these elders, taking the same posture of humility, they bow before the throne.

Brothers and sisters, are we as humble as we should be? If we think we are, we at once betray our pride. But let us understand how unseemly anything but humility must be to us. We are yet on earth; if they in heaven boast not, how dare we? We are yet sinful and erring; if the spotless ones bow what shall we do? If we threw dust and ashes on our head, and acknowledged ourselves to be the vilest of the vile, yet were the words not too coarse for us, nor the action too humiliating. Far hence from us be the pride which would let us exalt ourselves. Pride is natural to us all brethren, we cannot get rid of it, even though we strive against it. What shall we say of those who nurture it—whose very carriage and walk betray the pride of their hearts? What shall we say of the pride which finds root in the purse, or that which shows itself in outward array and garments? What shall we say of the pride of station and of rank, which will not permit the professedly Christian man to speak with his poorer brother? Oh! these are damnable things. I hope we despise, and are rid of these; but there is a subtler pride—a pride which apes humility—a pride which comes in after prayer, or after preaching, or after anything that is done for Christ? Let us strive against it, and be it our constant and daily endeavour to fall before the throne, "While less than nothing we can boast, and vanity confess."

2. But as they fall before the throne in humility, you will note that they express their *gratitude*. It is said they cast their crowns before the throne. They know where they got them from, and they know to whom to ascribe the praise. Their crowns are their own, and, therefore, they wear them on their heads; their crowns were Jesu's gift, and, therefore, they cast them at his feet. They wear their crown, for he hath made them kings, and they cannot refuse the dignity; but they cast the crown at his feet, for they are only kings by right received from him, and acknowledge him thus to be King of kings and Lord of lords. It was a custom, you know, in imperial Rome, for those kings who held dominion under the emperor, on certain occasions to take off their crowns and lay them down before the emperor, so that when he bade them put them on again, they had fully recognised that their rights of kingship flowed only through him. So do they who are before the throne. With what rapture, with what joy, with what delight, do they cast their crowns there! To think they have a crown, and a crown to cast before him! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid when you and I get any graces, or have been made useful in Christ's cause, we are glad for the thing's sake; but we are not right,

if so; we should be glad because we have something to cast at *his* feet. Have you faith? I must thank *him* for faith, I must lay it at his feet, and say, "Jesu, use my faith for thy glory, for thou art its author and finisher." If you and I shall by divine grace persevere to the end, and shall arrive at heaven, it will be a joy to think that we are saved, but we will lay it all at the door of love divine. Will you wear a crown, believer? Will you accept jot or tittle of the glory? O no, ye will each of ye disown anything like the Arminian's proud boast of free self-will. It will be grace, grace, grace alone in heaven. There will be no division and no discord in that eternal hymn. We will cast our crowns at once before him, and we will say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." We imitate them, then, in this—in our gratitude mingled with humility,

3. Further, I well perceive that these elders spent their time in *joyous song*. How glorious was that strain—"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." These elders knew that the time was come when all earth and heaven should be more than usually glad. They, with the four living creatures, whom we take to be the representatives of some special order of presence-angels, about whom we know but little, led the strain; and as the music rolled through the aisles of heaven, distant angels, who were in all parts of God's dominion keeping watch and ward, stood still and listened till they had caught the strain; and then they joined with loudest notes, till from north and south, and east and west, from the highest star and from the uttermost depths, there came up the blessed refrain from ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" till, as these angelic ones sent up the song, the inferior creatures caught the divine infection, and in heaven and earth, the sea and the uttermost depths thereof, the voice was heard, and all creatures responded, while the universe echoed with the song, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." This is the occupation of saints before the throne; be it yours, brothers and sisters. Let us, as God's redeemed, sing with all our hearts, and let us enlist others in the strain. Let us remember that we are to be leaders in the hymn of God's works. We are to begin with, "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" but we are not to end there. We are to go on bidding all God's works praise him, till we come to a climax like that of David, "Bless the Lord, ye hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure; bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul." The world is the organ—we are the players. We are to put our fingers upon the notes, and wake the universe to thunders of acclaim. We are not to rest with our own feeble note, but we must wake even the dumb earth itself, till all the planets, listening to our earth, and joining her song, shall sing forth the music of the ages. God give you, brothers and sisters, to imitate the saints thus. Some of you perhaps are good hands at groaning; perhaps some of

you have come up here to-day mourning and murmuring; lay these things aside; take up your proper vocation, and now smite the strings of your harp; magnify the Lord; let the day of jubilee come to your spirits. Ye saints of God, rejoice; yea, in your God exceedingly rejoice.

4. Yet once again, these saints not only offered praise, but *prayer*. This was the meaning of the bowls, which are so foolishly translated vials. A vial is precisely the opposite of the vessel that was intended: the vial is long and narrow, whereas, this is broad and shallow. A bowl is meant, full of incense, covered over with a lid, and perforated with holes, through which the smoke of the incense rises. This does not mean that the four-and-twenty elders offer the prayers of the saints below, but their own prayers. Some have thought, Is there any prayer in heaven? Certainly, there is room for prayer in heaven. If you want proof, we have it in the chapter which follows the one out of which we have been reading this morning—the ninth verse of the sixth chapter—"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" There is prayer. Perhaps the prayers of the saints are the major portion of that perpetual litany which goeth up to heaven. But leaving that for a moment, let us imitate them. If *they* pray, how much more reason have we? If they plead for the universal Church, they who enjoy the rest of God, how should we pray who are still in this land of temptation and of sin, who see the perils of our brethren, know their weaknesses and their afflictions. Let us draw near unto God; let us never cease day and night to offer intercession for the whole company of the elect.

5. I must not forget, however, here, that these elders before the throne were ready not only for prayer and praise, but for *all kinds of service*. You remember there was one of them, when John wept, who said, "Weep not." Depend upon it that elder had been occupied in visiting the sick when he was on earth; and often when he had gone into their cottages and found them sorrowing, he had said unto them, "Weep not;" and the good man had not lost his character when he went to heaven, although it had been spiritualized and perfected; and seeing John weeping, he said to him, "Weep not." Ah! those saints before the throne, if there were mourners there, would comfort them, I know; and if they could be sent down here to visit any of the sorrowing children of God, they would be too glad to do it. Then there was, you remember, another of the elders, who said to John, for his instruction, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that came out of great tribulation." I venture to believe that this elder used to teach a catechumen class on earth; that he had been in the habit of teaching young people, and he put the question to John first, as he had been in the habit aforetime of putting it to young disciples on earth. The saved ones would be ready to teach us now, if they could; and they do to-day bear testimony for Christ, for to the ages to come God through his Church makes known to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of his grace.

Now, those before the throne are willing to *comfort the weeper or to instruct the ignorant.* Let us do the same! and may it be ours to wipe the tear from many an eye, to chase the darkness of ignorance from many a young heart. Have you been doing that lately, brothers and sisters? If not, mend your ways; be more earnest in these two good works, visit the fatherless, the widow, the suffering, the mourning, and to teach the ignorant and those that are out of the way.

III. And now, lastly, WHAT IS THEIR WORD AND LESSON TO US THIS MORNING? Bending from their shining thrones, being dead they yet speak; and they say to us thus:

First, by way of encouragement, brethren, *follow on.* Be not dismayed. We fought the same battles that you fight, and passed through the like tribulations; yet we have not perished, but enjoy the eternal reward. Press on; heaven awaits you; vacant thrones are here for you—crowns which no other heads can wear—harps that no other hands must play. Follow courageously, faithfully, trusting in him who hath begun the good work in you, and who will carry it on.

Hear them, again, as they say, mark the footsteps that we trod; for only in one way can you reach our rest. We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They say to all the world, If ye would be clean wash there too. None but Jesus can save your souls. Trust in him; repose in his atonement; confide in his finished work; flee to his sacrificial blood. You shall be saved by faith in him, even as we have been.

> "I asked them whence their victory came; they with united breath
> Ascribed their conquest to the Lamb, their triumph to his death."

Friends! are ye trusting in Christ? My hearers, many of you are perfect strangers to me this morning, I ask you; are you putting your trust in Christ? Have you come under the shadow of his cross, to find a refuge from his vengeance? If not, no golden crown can be for you; no harp of gold; but, whoever thou mayest be, if thou will believe in Christ Jesus, and put thy soul into his hand, thou shalt be a partaker of the glories which he hath laid up for them that love him.

Lastly, they say to us, as they look down from the battlements of heaven, Are ye getting ready to join our ranks, to take up our occupations, and to sing our song? Answer for yourself, my brother, as I must answer for myself. Are you living for your own pleasure? Then you must die; for "he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Are you living for Christ? Then shall you live; "because he lives you shall live also." Are you a priest to God to-day? You shall bear the golden bowl in heaven. Are you instead thereof a servant of your own body, your own lusts, your own gain, your own pleasure? Then the lowest depths must be your portion. Heaven is "a prepared place for a prepared people." Are we prepared? Brothers, sisters, can we say, "We hope in Christ; he is our only trust;" and do we endeavour to live to him? and though with many failings and frailties, yet still can we say, "For me to live is Christ?" Oh! if it be so,

> "Come, death, and some celestial band, to bear our souls away!"

But if it be not so, then our end must be destruction, because our God has been our belly.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 30TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."—Romans ix. 16.

"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Revelation xxii. 17.

THE great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of "the will." I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths, which, but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty. I believe there is a needs-be for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to arouse her powers and stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against—sectarianism, for "sectarianism" is the cant phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians; no matter what views he may hold, if a man be but in earnest, he is a sectarian at once. Success to sectarianism; let it live and flourish. When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness. When we cease, each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, then truth shall fly out of the land, and error alone shall reign: this, indeed, is the object of our foes: under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth. In the controversy which has raged,—a controversy

which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good—mistakes have arisen from two reasons. Some brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see. I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through thirty-four times on his knees, but could not see a word about election in it; I think it very likely that he could not; kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason; moreover, to get through the Book thirty-four times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and might as well have been dreaming over "Robinson Crusoe" as the Bible. He put the telescope to the blind eye. Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth, and therefore we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. "This is good; oh! this is precious!" say they, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact it is the only truth in the world. You know how often things are injured by over-praise; how a good medicine, which really was a great boon for a certain disease, comes to be despised utterly by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to its dishonour. Truth has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see all the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see. You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung up in gardens; you walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, and then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God's truth upon the model of this toy; they magnify one capital truth, till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten. In what I shall be able to say this morning you will probably detect the failing to which I allude, the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can help it, but I will endeavour honestly to bring out the truth as I have learned it, and if in ought ye see that I teach you what is contrary to the Word of God, reject it; but mark you, if it be according to God's Word, reject it at your peril; for when I have once delivered it to you, if ye receive it not the responsibility lies with you.

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, that *the work of salvation rests upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man;* and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that *the will of man has its proper position in the work of salvation, and is not to be ignored.*

I. First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD, AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN. So saith our text—"It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;"

by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved is not because *he* wills it, but because *God* willed, according to that other passage, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The whole scheme of salvation, we aver, from the first to the last, hinges and turns, and is dependant upon the absolute will of God, and not upon the will of the creature.

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that *analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument.* There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three which leads you to know that they are from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole, which will lead you to assert, "That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books." Now what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of *creation.* There was a time when these works had no existence; the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence. God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did he then take counsel? Who instructed him? Who had a voice in that council by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with his own will whether he would make or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in his thoughts entirely, in his keeping, so that he would or would not just as he pleased? And when he willed to create, did he not still exercise his own discretion and will as to what and how he would make? If he hath made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but his own will? If he hath chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit, is it not God's own fiat that hath made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from his moulding hand into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's bowels of rock? Who, save himself, ordained that yon Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her own verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, save God? You see running through creation, from the tiniest animalculæ up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will. Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying,

> "My goodness is most free
> To act or not: Necessity and Chance
> Approach not me, and what I will is fate."

He created as it pleased him; he made them as he chose; the potter exercised power over his clay to make his vessels as he willed, and to make them for what purposes he pleased. Think you that he has abdi-

cated the throne of grace? Does he reign in creation and not in grace? Is he absolute king over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is he Lord over the things which his hand made at first, and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein he maketh all things new?

But take the works of *Providence.* I suppose there will be no dispute amongst us that in providential matters God ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. If we should, however, be troubled with any doubts about that matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride—"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou." From the first moment of human history even to the last, God's will shall be done. What though it be a catastrophe or a crime—there may be the second causes and the action of human evil, but the great first cause is in all. If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea, anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of Providence would sink her, one hour in which Omnipotence relaxed its grasp and she would fall to atoms. But it is the comfortable conviction of all God's people that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and that God ruleth and overruleth, and reigneth in all acts of men and in all events that transpire; from seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according to the counsel of his will. And think you that he reigns in Providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has he given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common Providence is left as a lonely province to be his only heritage? He hath not let slip the reins of the great chariot of Providence, and think you that when Christ goeth forth in the chariot of his grace it is with steeds unguided, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no, brethren. As surely as God's will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God's will is the great heart of Providence sending its pulsings through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in grace let us rest assured that he is King, willing to do as he pleases, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, calling whom he chooses to call, quickening whom he wills, and fulfilling, despite man's hardness of heart, despite man's wilful rejection of Christ, his own purposes, his own decrees, without one of them falling to the ground. We think, then, that analogy helps to strengthen us in the declaration of the text, that salvation is not left with man's will.

2. But, secondly, *we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact, we cannot bear to look them in the face.* If there be difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite. We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that salvation depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge of them; but

that the difficulties in the other case do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused. According to their theory—that salvation depends upon our own will—you have first of all this difficulty to meet, *that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent.* You have an "if" put upon everything. Christ may die, but it is not certain according to that theory that he will redeem a great multitude; nay, not certain that he will redeem any, since the efficacy of the redemption, according to that plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man be, as we aver he always is, if he be a bond-slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God's grace, then in such a case the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it; and even when souls are saved by it, according to that theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself, but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps. There is a heaven provided, but there may be no souls who will ever come there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come. You may look at any one promise of grace, but you cannot say over it, "This is the sure mercy of David;" for there is an "if," and a "but;" a "perhaps," and a "peradventure." In fact, the reins are gone out of God's hands; the linch-pin is taken away from the wheels of the creation; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together of fortuitous atoms impelled by man's own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know. We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be glorified or sin will triumph. Oh! how happy are we when we come back to the old-fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who worketh all things to the good pleasure of his will.

Then another difficulty comes in; not only is everything made contingent, but it does seem to us *as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe.* According to the freewill scheme the Lord intends good, but he must wait like a lackey on his own creature to know what his intention is; God willeth good and would do it, but he cannot, because he has an unwilling man who will not have God's good thing carried into effect. What do ye, sirs, but drag the Eternal from his throne, and lift up into it that fallen creature, man; for man, according to that theory, nods, and his nod is destiny. You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills or as man wills. If it be as God wills, then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon his throne of glory, and all hosts obey him, and the world is safe; if not God, then you put man there, to say, "I will," or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Spirit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence; if I will it I will

make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the Son of God himself; though God make his purpose, yet will I laugh at his purpose; it shall be my purpose that shall make his purpose stand, or make it fall." Why, sirs, if this be not Atheism, it is idolatry; it is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works—the salvation of man—to be dependant upon the will of his creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can and must in my text in its fullest sense. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

3. We think *that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own will;* and hence is a great confirmation of the truth that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God that chooses, and not man,—God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;" you will say that is a figure. I grant it, but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is spiritually dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the spiritual act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil and that continually, but he is not alive to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to another Scripture, that he cannot even discern that which is spiritual? for the natural man knoweth not the things which be of God, seeing they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. Why, he has not a "spirit" with which to discern them; he has only a soul and body, but the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, "the spirit," he knows nothing of, and he is therefore incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then, again, what make you of the words of our Saviour where he said to those who had heard even him, "Ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life?" Where is free-will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not, who dare say they will? "Ah, but," you say, "they could if they would." Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am not talking about if they would, the question is "*will they?* and we say "no," they never will by nature. Man is so depraved, so set on mischief, and the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it, and will not like it, unless he who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will. Mark, this stubborn will of man is his sin; he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ, therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact does not alter for all that, that he will not come by nature if left to himself. Well, then, if man will not, how shall he be saved unless God shall make him will?—unless, in some mysterious way, he who made the heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows.

4. But there is another argument which will come closer home to us. *It is consistent with the universal experience of all God's people that salvation is of God's will.* You will say, "I have not had a very long life, I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly protest before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature. Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit that made them what they are; that they should have refused to come as others do unless God's grace had sweetly influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley's hymn-book which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayers into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked to force him to be saved by grace. Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their experimental sentiments are the same. I do not think they would any of them refuse to join in the verse—

> "Oh! yes, I do love Jesus,
> Because he first loved me."

Nor would they find fault with our own hymn,

> "'T was the same love that spread the feast,
> That sweetly forced us in;
> Else we had still refused to taste,
> And perished in our sin."

We bring out the crown and say, "On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?" and the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say, "Crown *him*; crown *him*, put it on *his* head, for *he* is worthy; *he* has made us to differ; *he* has done it, and unto *him* be the praise for ever and ever." What staggers me is, that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience,—that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie.

5. But, lastly, in the way of argument, and to bring out our great battering-ram at the last. It is not, after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the known feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure, then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two, and let us see what Scripture saith on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God's preparation, and his plan with regard to salvation. We turn to the apostle's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find in the first chapter and the third verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the

world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will"—a double word you notice—it is according to the will of his will. No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will of God. It seems, then, that the choice of his people and their adoption is according to his will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him." So, then, it seems that the grand result of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of his will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God? Moreover, it says in the eleventh verse—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" a stronger expression than "of his will"—"of his own will," his free unbiassed will, his will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose—redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, tenth chapter, ninth verse: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified." So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the result of the divine will. There will be little controversy here: the main point is about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion. Turn to the Gospel according to John, the first chapter, and thirteenth verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does: "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." In these passages—and they are not the only ones—the new birth is peremptorily and in the strongest language put down as being the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God. As to the sanctification which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God's holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourteenth chapter, and third verse, we have, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." One more passage I shall need you to refer to, the sixth chapter, and thirty-ninth verse. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance, the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God's people, rests upon his will. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day; and this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And

indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these mercies even as he gives the gifts of the Spirit according as he wills. We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth, and speak a little while upon it.

II. MAN'S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION. "*Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely.*" According to this and many other texts of Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by compulsion. When a man receives the grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought of forgiveness. No man shall have joy in the Lord if he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them behind into the gates of heaven. They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will; nor again, mark you, is the will taken away; for God does not come and convert the intelligent free-agent into a machine. When he turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; nay, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we are never free before. Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ "with full consent against his will," by which he meant it was against his old will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be saved—no, that is a cold word—as delighted, as pleased, as transported to receive Christ as if grace had not constrained him. But we do hold and teach that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to change the human will, and so make men willing in the day of God's power, working in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure. The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is persuasion. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; pleads with us; puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral suasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral suasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the visible means. As to the secret work, who knows how the

Spirit works? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" but yet, as far as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of truth to the soul, whereby it seeth things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which once it despised, and wears it gladly, cheerfully, and joyfully. Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of deal; but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws. Man is thus made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you,—and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things,—this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, insomuch that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart; such a sign is it that if it be real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom. I say not that he is so saved that he himself may conclude he is, but there is a work begun, which has the germ of salvation in it. If thou art willing, depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if thou art anxious after Christ, he is more anxious after thee. If thou hast only one spark of true desire after him, that spark is a spark from the fire of his love to thee. He has drawn thee, or else thou wouldest never run after him. If you are saying, "Come to me, Jesu," it is because he has come to you, though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought him like a returning prodigal. He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek him as a lost child would seek a father's face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers, that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach one side of truth, but we try if we can to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it, and say it is a yea and nay gospel. Believe me, it is not yea and nay, but yea and yea. We give our yea to all truth, and our nay we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? *Yea.* And if he does come, does he come because God brings him? Yea. We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth. We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those are the yea and nay people who have a nay to the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel. As soon

as a man has any willingness given to him, he has a special promise. Before he had that willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his duty to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a right to believe. Men are to believe in obedience to God's command. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and this is his great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Hence your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise—"Whosoever will let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. Methinks this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect. "The hen goes clucking about the farm-yard all day long; that is the general call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the special call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul! are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, willing, willing indeed; I cannot use that word; I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean that; I know I cannot purchase it; I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could but be saved, I would ask nothing else.

'Lord, deny me what thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at thy feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die.'"

Why, then the Lord speaks to you this morning, to you if not to any other man in the chapel, he speaks to you and says—"Whosoever will let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you. When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but you cannot now. You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely. "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take the water of life now. You are standing by the fountain outside there, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are specially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," says he, "come and drink." "But, sir, I want to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not want it," he says, "drink now, drink now." What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save thee now. Trust thy soul in his hands now. No preparation is wanted. Whosoever will let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on him; to take him to be your all in all. Oh that thou wouldest do it now!

Thou art willing; God has made thee willing. When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the hermit, as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "*Deus vult;* God wills it; God wills it;" and every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulchre, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner; God wills it. Trust Jesus; God wills it. If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it. "Father, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink of the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for his people; let it be said in heaven, "God's will is done; hallelujah, hallelujah!" "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" yet "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely."

Mr. SPURGEON invites the attention of readers of these Sermons to Mr. STOCK'S "Handbook of Revealed Theology." The work was compiled for the use of the Students in the College at the Tabernacle, and a copy will be sent free by post for the published price of Three Shillings on application to Mr. BLACKSHAW at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 6TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."—Luke v. 4.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."—John xxi. 6.

THE whole life of Christ was a sermon. He was a prophet mighty in word and deed; and by his deeds as well as his words he taught the people. It is perfectly true that the miracles of Christ attest his mission. To those who saw them they must have been evident proof that he was sent of God. But we ought not to overlook that probably a higher reason for the miracles is to be found in the instruction which they convey. To the world without, at the present time, the miracles of Christ are more hard to believe than the doctrine which he taught. Sceptics turn them into stones of stumbling, and when they cannot cavil at the marvellous teaching of Jesus, they attack the miracles as monstrous and incredible. I doubt not that even to minds seriously vexed with unbelief, the miracles, instead of being helps to belief, have been trials of faith. Few indeed are there in whom faith is wrought by signs and wonders; nor indeed is this the gospel way of bringing conviction to the soul: the secret force of the living word is the chosen instrumentality of Christ, and wonders are left to be the resort of that Anti-Christ by whom the nations shall be deceived. We, who by grace have believed, view the miracles of Christ as noble attestations to his mission and divinity, but we confess that we value them even more as instructive homilies than as attesting witnesses; it is our conviction that we should lose much of the benefit which they were meant to convey to us, if we were merely to view them as seals to the roll, for they are a part of the writing of the roll itself. The marvels wrought by our blessed Lord are acted sermons fraught with holy doctrine, set forth to us more vividly than it could have been in words. We start with the assumption upon which our sermon will be grounded this morning, that Christ's miracles are sermons preached in deeds, visible allegories, truths embodied, principles incarnated and set in motion; they are, in fact, the pictures in the great book of Christ's teaching, the illustrations by which he flashed light into dim eyes.

We have heard of some ministers who could say that they had often preached from the same text, but they had never delivered the same discourse. The like may be said of Christ. He often preached upon the same truth, but it was never precisely in the same manner. We have read in your hearing this morning, the narrative of two miracles (Luke v. and John xxi.) which seem to the casual observer to be precisely alike; but he who shall read diligently and study carefully, will find that though the text is the same in both, yet the discourse is full of variations. In both the miraculous draughts of fishes, the text is the mission of the saints to preach the gospel—the work of man-catching—the ministry by which souls are caught in the net of the gospel, and brought out of the element of sin to their eternal salvation. The preacher is compared to a fisherman. The fisherman's vocation is a toilsome one; woe be to that minister who finds his calling to be otherwise. The fisherman must go forth in rough weathers, and at all hazards; if he should only fish in a calm sea he may often starve. So the Christian minister, whether men will receive the word with pleasure, or reject it with anger and wrath, must be ready to imperil reputation and risk comfort; yea, he must hate his own life also, or he is not worthy of the heavenly calling. The fisherman's is a rough occupation; no dainty fingers may come in contact with his nets. It is not a trade for gentlemen, but for rough, strong, fearless men, who can heave a rope, handle a tar-brush, or scour a deck. The ministry is not meant for your dainty souls who would go delicately through this world without a trial, an offence, an insult, or a sneer. Such work is meant for men who know how to do business on great waters, and can go abroad upon the sea, not fearing the spray or the waves. The fisherman's calling, too, must be carried on perseveringly; it is not by one grand haul that a man makes his fortune; he must constantly cast forth his net. One sermon makes not a preacher; he who shall but now and then deliver himself of some carefully prepared oration, is no true minister of God. He must be instant in season and out of season; he must cast his net in all waters; he must in the morning be at his work, and in the evening he must not withhold his hand. To be a fisherman, a man must expect disappointments; he must often cast in the net and bring up nothing but weeds. The minister of Christ must reckon upon being disappointed; and he must not be weary in well-doing for all his disappointments, but must in faith continue in prayer and labour, expecting that at the end he shall receive his reward. It needeth no great labour for you to work out at leisure the comparison between fishermen and the gospel ministry, the simile is so aptly chosen.

The two narratives before us have a degree of uniformity; that shall be our first point. *But they have a greater degree of dissimilarity;* we will bring that out in the second place. And, then, thirdly, we will suggest *some great lessons which they both combine to teach us.*

I. First, then, IN THESE TWO MIRACLES THERE ARE MANY POINTS OF UNIFORMITY. They are both intended to set forth the way in which Christ's kingdom shall increase.

1. First you will perceive that in both miracles we are taught that *the means must be used.* In the first case, the fish did not leap into Simon's boat to be taken; nor, in the second case, did they swarm

from the sea and lay themselves down upon the blazing coals that they might be prepared for the fisherman's feast. No, the fishermen must go out in their boat, they must cast the net; and after having cast the net, they must either drag it ashore, or fill both boats with its contents. Everything is done here by human agency. It is a miracle, certainly, but yet neither the fisherman, nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle are ignored; they are all used and all employed. Let us learn that in the saving of souls God worketh by means; that so long as the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Every now and then there creeps up in the Church a sort of striving against God's ordained instrumentality. I marked it with sorrow during the Irish Revival. We constantly saw in some excellent papers remarks which I thought exceedingly injurious, wherein it was made a subject of congratulation that no man was concerned in the work, no eminent preacher, no fervent evangelist; the whole was boasted to be conducted without human instrumentality. That was the weakness of the Revival, not its strength. You say it gave God the more glory. Not so. God getteth the most glory through the use of instruments. When God worketh without instruments, doubtless he is glorified; but he knows himself in which way he getteth the most honour, and he hath himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which he is most magnified in the earth. We have this treasure. How? Alone? Without any earthly accompaniment? No; but in earthen vessels. What for? That God may have less glory? No; but in the earthen vessels on purpose "that the excellency of the power may be of God," and not of us. God maketh the infirmity of the creature to be the foil to the strength of the Creator. He taketh men who are nothing in themselves and worketh by them his splendid victories. Perhaps, we should not admire Samson so much if he had dashed the Philistines in pieces with his fist, as we do when we find that with such a weapon, so unadapted to the work, as the jaw-bone of an ass, he laid on heaps the thousands of his foes. The Lord takes ill-weapons, that with them he may work great deeds. When he said, "Let there be light, and there was light" without any instrument, he showed his glory; but when instead thereof he takes the apostles and says again, "Let there be light," and sends *them* forth who were darkness in themselves, and makes them the medium of lighting up a dark world, I say there is a greater glory; and if the morning stars sang together when they first saw light upon the new-made earth, surely the angels in heaven rejoiced yet more when they saw light thus streaming upon the dark earth through men, who, in and of themselves, would only have increased the blackness and made the gloom more dense. God worketh by means of men whom he specially calls to his work, and not as a rule without them. The Plymouth-ist strives to get rid of the pastorate, but he never can, for the Lord will ever continue to give pastors after his own heart to feed his people, and all attempts made by the flock to dispense with these pastors will lead to leanness and poverty of soul. The outcry against the "one man ministry" cometh not of God, but of proud self-conceit, of men who are not content to learn although they have no

power to teach. It is the tendency of human nature to exalt itself which has raised up these disturbers of the peace of God's Israel, for they will not endure to submit themselves to the authorities which God has himself appointed, and abhor the teachings of the apostle, where he says, by the Spirit of God, "Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable to you." Brethren, I warn you, there is a spirit abroad which would pull down the men whom God himself has raised up, that would silence those into whose mouths God has put the tongue of fire, that foolish men might prate according to their own will to the profit of no one, and to their own shame. As for us, we shall, I trust, never cease to recognise that agency by which the Lord works mightily among us. We would check no ministry in the Church of God. We would but be too glad to see it more abundantly exercised. Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets! But we enter our solemn protest against that spirit which, under pretence of liberty to all, sets aside the instrumentality by which the Lord especially works. He will have you still keep the fishermen to their nets and to their boats; and your new ways of catching fish without nets, and saving souls without ministers, will never answer, for they are not of God. They have been tried, and what has been the result of the trial? I know not a Church in existence that has despised instrumentality, but it has come to an end within a few years either by schism or decay. Where upon the face of the earth is there a single Church that has existed fifty years where God's chosen instrumentality of ministry has been despised and rejected? "Ichabod!" is written upon their walls. God rejects them because they reject God's chosen way of working. Their attempts are flashes in the pan, meteoric lights, will-o'-the-wisps, swellings of proud flesh, bubbles of foam, here to-day and gone for ever on the morrow.

2. Again, in both our texts there is another truth equally conspicuous, namely, that *means of themselves are utterly unavailing.* In the first case you hear the confession, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." In the last case you hear them answer to the question, "Children, have ye no meat?" "No"—a sorowful No. What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special calling? Verily, they were no raw hands; they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskilfully? No. Had they lacked industry? No, they had *toiled.* Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had toiled *all the night.* Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master comes there they are by shoals. What, then, is the reason? Is it not because there is no power in the means of themselves apart from the presence of Christ? The Great Worker who does not discard the means would still have his people know that he uses instrumentality, not to glorify the instrument, but for the sake of glorifying himself. He takes weakness into his hands and makes it strong, not that weakness may be worshipped, but that the strength may be adored which even makes weakness subservient to his might. Brethren, let us as a Church always keep this in mind, that without Christ we can do nothing. "Not

by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Put no dependence upon societies, upon committees, upon ministries, upon anything that we can do. Let us work as if it all depended upon us; but let us come to God depending upon him, knowing of a surety that it does not rest with us, but with Him alone. Let us send forth the missionaries to the heathen; let us send forth our men into the dark streets and lanes of London; let us scatter tracts; let us distribute the Word of God; let us send forth preachers by scores from our "School of the Prophets;" but when this is done, let us not sit still and say, "Now it is all accomplished, good must come of it." Nay, Lord, unless thy blessing descend from on high, as well might we have done nothing, for no eternal results can follow.

How often this drives me to my knees. The surprising work which God is doing in connection with this place lifts up my heart with joy; but then the fear lest it all should come to nothing for lack of his blessing casts my spirit to the very earth. You will remember, I dare say, that one brother was moved some time ago to distribute a volume of the sermons preached here to every student in Oxford and Cambridge. After that had been done, and some two hundred thousand sermons had been distributed, he then gave them to every member of Parliament, to every peer of the realm, and to princes, kings, and emperors of Europe, and having accomplished that work, he has another in hand of great magnitude. Dear friends, as I think of these books travelling everywhere among high and low, the rich and poor in all places of the land, my heart is glad; but then, if God withholds the blessing, as well had they never been born in the press and circulated by human hand. What good can they do? Let the net be never so broad, never so strong, and let it be never so industriously cast into the sea, yet we shall toil all the night and take nothing unless the Master comes to own the work. Let us, then, be always in prayer for the blessing. Let us remember that we have done nothing until we have prayed over what we have done, let us consider that all the seed we have put into the ground is put there for worms to eat, unless we have dropped into the soil the preserving grain of prayer to keep that other grain alive. We shall have harvests if we wait on God for them, but after all our sowing, if we look to the soil, the seed, or the sower, we shall see nothing for our pains.

8. Thirdly, there is clearly taught in both these miracles the fact that it is *Christ's presence that confers success.* Christ sat in Peter's boat. It was his will that by a mysterious influence drew the fish to the net, as though he had a hook, a secret hook in each of their jaws, could stop them in their sportive leapings, and hurry them all to one common centre. It was his presence on the dry land, when he spake from off the shore to his toiling disciples out yonder, and said "Cast the net on the right side of the ship"—it was his presence that drew the fish to the place where they were taken. Oh, brethren, we must learn this—that it is Christ's presence in the midst of the Church that is the Church's power—the shout of a King in the midst of her. It is the presence of Christ's great representative, the Holy Spirit, that is to give the Church force. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." There is the attraction. The Spirit gives the power, and we must tarry until we get

it; but when we have it, then we cannot preach in vain, for we become "a savour of life unto life" to those who hear. Christians, Christ's presence with you must be your power. Be much in fellowship with him; catch much of his Spirit; meditate much upon his sufferings; keep close to his person; and then, wherever you go there shall be a power about you which even your adversaries shall be compelled to acknowledge. Oh that we had more of Christ's presence in us as a Church! Lift up your hearts for it. If Christ be here at all, let us not grieve him. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please." And if he be not here let us rise from the bed of our sloth and go forth and seek him, crying, "Oh thou whom my soul loveth, tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon!" And if ye find him, I charge ye hold him, and let him not go till ye bring him into our mother's house, into the chamber of her that bare us, even the Church of Christ; there will we hold him, there will we embrace him, and he shall show to us his loves.

4. In both instances *the success* which attended the instrumentality through Christ's presence *developed human weakness*. We do not see human weakness more in non-success than in success. In the first instance, in the success you see the weakness of man, for the net breaks and the ships begin to sink, and Simon Peter falls down with—"Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He did not know so much about that till his boat was filled; but the very abundance of God's mercy made him feel his own nothingness. In the last case, they were scarcely able to draw the net because of the multitude of fishes. Brethren, if you or I would know to the fullest extent what utter nothings we are, if the Lord shall give us success in winning souls we shall soon find it out. As we see first one, and then another, and then scores, and then hundreds brought to the Lord Jesus, we shall say, "Who hath begotten me these? how can such wonders be wrought by me?" And we shall fall prostrate before the footstool of sovereign grace, and confess that we are unworthy of such amazing favours. Let the Church spread, let her conquests be many, let her overrun whole provinces with her heavenly arms, and instead of man becoming more famous, man shall sink lower and lower, and it shall be more and more fully perceived that it is the Lord. Little works, such as have been common in our Churches for years, where twos and threes are added, are quite consistent with great self-congratulation, and so is utter barrenness; mark the pompous carriage of many a fruitless preacher and see if it be not so. Let the Lord make bare his arm and the man humbles himself in the dust, for when hundreds are ingathered, this cannot be the minister, this is the finger of God. The man is forgotten, then, in the very abundance of his success, and the Lord alone is magnified in that day. Oh that God would do in the Churches of England some great and stupendous works by all his ministers! then would they discover their own weakness, and then would the name of God be glorified. You frequently meet with the observation, if a man be successful in winning souls, "I am afraid he will grow proud: how we ought to pray that he may be kept humble!" Brethren, that is a very necessary prayer for anybody; but it is no more

necessary for the man who is successful than for the unsuccessful one; in fact, it is an assumption of pride on any person's part to think that he has less need to pray against pride than any other man. Think not that when the Church prospers it becomes necessarily proud. Nay, the very fulness of the boat makes it sink, and the very abundance of the miracle makes us cry out the more, "It is the Lord," for we feel that it could not have been of man, for it is out of man's reach to have accomplished such wonders.

So far, then, there is a likeness running through the whole. Means must be used; means alone, unavailing; Christ's presence gives the success; that success developes human weakness, and leads to the exclamation—"It is the Lord."

II. Having, then, shown the likeness, you will be still more interested in REMARKING THE DISSIMILARITY.

Allow us to say in the commencement, that we think the first picture represents the Church of God as we see it; the second represents it as it really is. The first pictures to us the visible, the second the invisible. Luke tells us what the crowd see; John tells us what Christ shewed to his disciples alone. The first is common truth which the multitude may receive, the next is special mystery revealed only to spiritual minds. Observe, then, carefully, the points of divergence.

1. First, there is a difference in the orders given. In the first, it is, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second it is, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." The first is Christ's order to every minister; the second is the secret work of his Spirit in the word. The first shows us that the ministry is to fish anywhere and everywhere. All the orders that the Christian has, as to his preaching, is, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your net." He is not to single out any particular character; he is to preach to everybody, sensible sinners and insensible sinners; he is to preach to the dead dry bones of the valley as well as to the living souls. He is not to look where the fish are, but just to throw the net in, doing as his Master tells him. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Those ministers who preach only to the elect should remember this. Our business is to include all sorts of fish, and not to be particular about where we are, but just splash the net in. What if we be in town, or city, or village? what if we be among the rich or poor, learned or illiterate? what if we be among the debauched or immoral? we have nothing to do with that—our duty is the same, to "launch out into the deep, and let down the net,"—that is all. Christ will find the fish: it is no business of ours. The secret truth is, that when we are doing this, the Lord knows how to guide us, so that we "cast the net on the right side of the ship." That is the secret and invisible work of the Spirit, whereby he so adapts our ministry, which is in itself general, that he makes it particular and special. We speak to all, and he speaks to some. We blow the trumpet, but only the bankrupt debtors hear it: only those who are truly of the Spirit of God know the joyful sound and rejoice therein. *We* cannot single them out, but God can. We thrust in the blessed loadstone of the gospel, and that heavenly magnet has an affinity to some hearts which God has quickened,

so that as many as were ordained unto eternal life believe. The apostles preached to the crowd, but the Lord God the Holy Spirit, who had decreed the salvation of his chosen, sent the word home with power to the chosen and separated ones. What a joy it is to think that we always have a picked congregation here, for the Lord has picked them! Though they are crowded together promiscuously—here the good and there the bad, all sorts mingled and mixed together—yet God brings them in according to his eternal purpose, and all the while there is a core of chosen souls inside the mass of the congregation to whom God is applying the word. We cast the net, after all, on the right side of the ship, and we do find it fill.

2. In the first instance you will clearly see that there is a distinct plurality. The fishermen have nets—in the plural; they have boats—in the plural. There is plurality of agency employed. Each man seems to come out distinctly. In the next case, it is one. There are many men, but they are all in *one boat.* They unitedly drag the net, and it is but *one net*—there is no division, it is all one. Now, this is the visible and the invisible. To us, the means that God makes use of to bring sinners to himself are various. Sometimes we are in one boat trying to catch all the fish we can. There is another boat over yonder, and they are trying to do the same. We ought to consider them as being partners, and whenever our boat gets too full, we should beckon to our partners in the other ship to come and help us. We ought not to look upon those brethren who differ from us as though they were emptying the sea, and rivalling us. The more the merrier. The more men to do good, the more will the Lord's name be praised. I think, in many of our towns where some of our whining brethren say that all good people should go to one chapel, that it is far better to have three or four. I question whether the plurality of agency involved in denominations is not a great boon and blessing. Instead of, in the slightest degree, standing out against my brethren for carrying out their convictions, I praise them and look upon them as partners in another ship. Our denominational distinctions help to keep us awake, thus we stir one another up, and do far more good in the world than would be the case if there were only a nominal Church. God would have the agency diverse. There must be several nets, and there must be several fishermen, and these fishermen in different boats. So far as we are able to see, there will always be a Paul and a Barnabas, who cannot get on together; there will always be outward divisions in the ministry; and I avow myself the advocate and lover of these things. As I said last Sabbath, the thing called Sectarianism I do not disown but maintain.

But let us look to the inward. In John they are all in one boat, all fishing together, all dragging one net. Ah, brethren, this is what is really the fact. We do not see it, but all God's ministers are dragging one net, and all God's Church is in one ship. Oh, I bless God for that sweet doctrine! It is no use striving after outward uniformity; we shall never see it. Neither the texture of the human mind nor the will of God require it. It is of no use to contend against the diversities which exist in the great visible Church; I do not know that these differences are evils. They are the natural results of man's finite character, and

must and will exist to the end of the chapter. It is the unity of the Spirit; it is unity in Christ Jesus; it is unity in love to one another that God would have us regard. Let us learn this unity from the fact, that after all, though we may look as if we differed, yet if we be God's ministers, there is only one ministry; if we be God's Church, there is only one Church in the world; there is only one spouse of the Lord Jesus; there is only one fold and one shepherd. Though to our eyes it will always be so, two boats, or twenty boats; two nets, ay, fifty nets, yet to him who sees all things better than we do, there is only one boat and one net; and they shall all who are taken in that one net be safely brought to shore.

3. Thirdly, there is another difference. In the first case, how many fish were caught? The text says, "a great multitude." In the second case, a great multitude are taken too, but they are all counted and numbered. "A hundred and fifty and three." Luke does not tell us how many were caught the first time, for there were some of them not worth the counting; but the second time you will perceive the exact number is recorded, "a hundred and fifty and three." What was *Peter's* reason for counting them? We cannot tell. But I think I know why the Lord made him do it. It was to show us that though in the outward instrumentality of gathering the people into the Church the number of the saved is to us a matter of which we know nothing definitely, yet secretly and invisibly the Lord has counted them even to the odd one, he knoweth well how many the gospel net shall bring in. See where the word is preached what a great multitude are brought in! Thousands, tens of thousands are added to the different Churches of Christ, and make a profession of their faith. It were impossible to reckon all over Christendom how many have been taken in the outward net of the visible Church of Christ. But, brethren, it is quite possible for it to be known of God how many shall be brought at last, and how many now are in the *invisible* Church. He has counted them, foreordained their number, fixed them, settled them. The number "one hundred and fifty-three" seems to me to represent a large definite number. They shall be in heaven a number that no man can number, for God's elect are not few; but they shall be a number whom God can number, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his." They shall be a number certain and fixed, which shall neither be diminished nor increased, but shall abide the same according to his purpose and will. Now, *I*, as a preacher, have nothing to do with counting fish. My business is with the great multitude. Splash goes the net again! Oh Master! thou who hast taught us to throw the net and bring in a multitude, guide into it the hundred and fifty and three!

4. Yet again, notice another difference. The fish that were taken the first time appear to have been of all sorts. The net was broken, and therefore, doubtless some of them got out again; there were some so little that they were not worth eating, and doubtless were thrown away. "They shall gather the good into vessels and throw the bad away." In the second case, the net was full of great fishes; they were all great fishes, all good for eating, all the one hundred and fifty-three were worth the keeping, there was not one little fellow to be thrown back

into the deep again. The first gives us the outward and visible effect of the ministry. We gather into Christ's Church a great number. And there will always be in that number some that are not good, that are not really called of God. Sometimes we have Church-meetings in which we have to throw the bad away. We have many blissful meetings where it is gathering-in the fish—and what big hauls of fish has God given to us! Glory be to his name! But at other times we have to sit down and tell our fish over, and there are some who must be thrown away; neither God nor man can endure them. Thus is it in the outward and visible Church. Let no man be surprised if the tares grow up with the wheat—it is the order of things, it must be so. Let none of us wonder if there be wolves in sheep's clothing—it always will be so. There was a Judas among the twelve; there will be deceivers among us to the end of the chapter. Not so the invisible Church—the Church within the Church—the holy of holies within the temple. In that there is none to throw away. No; the Lord who brought them into the net, brought the right sort in; he did not bring one hypocrite or apostate; and having brought them in to the exact number of one hundred and fifty and three, they cannot one of them get out again, but they are kept in that net, for that net does not break; they are in the secret invisible Church of Christ, and they cannot get out of it, let them do what they may. They may even give up their nominal profession, and thus get out of the visible Church, but they cannot give up their secret possession; they cannot escape from the secret and invisible Church, and they shall all be kept there till the net is dragged to land, and the whole hundred and fifty and three saved.

5. Yet again, you notice in the first case the net broke, and in the second case it did not. Now, in the first case, in the visible Church the net breaks. My brethren are always calling out "the net is broken!" No doubt it is a bad thing for nets to break; but you need not wonder at it. We cannot just now, when the net is full, stop to mend it; it will break. It is the necessary consequence of our being what we are that the net will break. What mean you by this? Why, that instead of having some one denomination, we have twenty or thirty? The net is broken. I do not at all grieve over it. I believe it is what must be as long as we are flesh and blood. For until you get a set of perfect men, you never will have anything but these divisions. The net must break and will break. But glory be to God, the net does not break after all in reality, for though the visible Church may seem to be rent and torn to pieces, the invisible Church is one. God's chosen, God's called, God's quickened, God's blood-bought, they are one in heart, and one in soul, and one in spirit. Though they may wear different names among men, yet they still wear before God their Father's name written on their foreheads; and they are and always must be one.

You perceive, brethren, that I do not advise you to strive after a nominal unity. The more you strive after that, the more divisions there will be. Certain brethren left many of our denominations, and formed, they said, a Church that should not be a sect. All they did was to make a sect the most sectarian of sects—the most narrow and most bitter of cliques, though containing some of the best men, some of the

best Christians, and the ablest writers of the times. You cannot make a visible uniformity, it is beyond your power—the net is broken. There now! take care of the fish and leave the net alone, but still maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness. Take care that you are not a schismatic in your heart, that you hold no heresy in your soul, that you are one with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and in this you will soon see that the net is not broken, but that the saints are one. Ah, I bless God that when once we get with God's people—it does not matter what they are—we soon find the net is not broken. There is many a godly clergyman of the Church of England with whom I commune with the greatest joy, and I have found the net was not broken; and in conversing with brethren of all denominations, some who from doctrine, some who from sentiment stand wide as the poles asunder, I have still found and known that there was such a real and perfect harmony of heart that the net was not broken. I do not believe that charity would ever have had such perfect work in Christ's Church if it had not been for our being divided into tribes, like the twelve tribes of old. It is no charity for me to love a brother who thinks as I think—I cannot very well help it; but for me to love a dear brother who differs from me in in some points, why there is exercise and room for my charity; and as God has left trials and troubles to exercise faith, I believe he has left us in many doctrinal difficulties on purpose to exercise our love till the day shall come when we shall all grow to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. The net is not broken, brethren; do not believe it, and when you read about this denomination and that, do not be grieved at these names and tribes, but rather thank God for them; say, that is the visible Church, and the net is broken; but there is an invisible Church where the net is not broken, where we are one in Christ, and must be one for ever.

There are several other points of difference, but I think we have hardly time to enlarge upon them. I will only hint at them. In the first case, which is the visible Church, you see the human weakness becomes the strongest point; there is the boat ready to sink, there is the net broken, there is the men all out of heart, frightened, amazed, and begging the Master to go away. In the other case it is not so at all. There is human weakness, but still they are made strong enough. They have no strength to spare, as you perceive, but still they are strong enough, the net does not break, the ship goes slowly to land dragging the fish; and then, lastly, Simon Peter pulls the fish to shore. Strong he must have been. They were just strong enough to get their fish to shore. So in the visible Church of Christ you will often have to mourn over human weakness: but in the invisible Church, God will make his servants just strong enough —just strong enough to drag their fish to shore. The agencies, means, instrumentalities, shall have just sufficient force to land every elect soul in heaven, that God may be glorified.

Then, notice, in the first case, in the visible Church they launched out into the deep. In the second case, it says they were not far from the shore, but a little way. So to-day our preaching seems to us to be going out into the great stormy deep after fish. We appear to have a long way to reach before we shall bring these precious souls to land. But in the sight of God we are not far from shore; and when a soul is

saved, it is not far from heaven. To us there are years of temptation, and trial, and conflict; but to God, the Most High, it is finished—"it is done." They are saved: they are not far from shore.

In the first case, the disciples had to forsake all and follow Christ. In the second, they sat down to feast with him at the dainty banquet which he had spread. So in the visible Church to-day we have to bear trial and self-denial for Christ, but glory be to God, the eye of faith perceives that we shall soon drag our net to land, and then the Master will say, "Come and dine;" and we shall sit down and feast in his presence, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

III. The time is gone, and I close by NOTICING ONE AMONG MANY LESSONS WHICH THE TWO NARRATIVES IN COMMON SEEM TO TEACH.

In the first case, Christ was in the ship. Oh, blessed be God, Christ is in his Church, though she launch out into the deep. In the second case, Christ was on the shore. Blessed be God, Christ is in heaven. He is not here, but he has risen; he has gone up on high for us. But whether he be in the Church, or whether he be on the shore in heaven, *all our night's toiling shall, by his presence, have a rich reward.* That is the lesson. Mother, will you learn it? You have been toiling long for your children. It has been night with you as yet. They give no evidence of grace; rather they give many signs of sin, and they grieve your spirit. Your night's toiling shall have an end; you shall at last cast the net on the right side of the ship. Sunday-school teacher, you have been diligently labouring long, and with but little fruit; be not discouraged, the Master will not let you work in vain; in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not; and as these disciples had a great sea harvest, so shall you have a harvest of souls. Minister, you have been ploughing some barren rock, and as yet no joyful sheaves have made your heart glad. You shall, doubtless, "Come again, rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you." And thou, O Church of God, travailing for souls, meeting daily in prayer, pleading with men that they will come to Christ, what if they are not saved yet? The morning cometh, the night is far spent, and the Master himself shall soon appear; and though he may not find faith on the earth, yet his advent shall bring to his Church the success for which she has waited—such success that as a woman remembereth no more her travail because a man is born into the world, so shall the Church remember no more her toils, her efforts and her prayers, because Christ's kingdom has come, and his will is done on earth even as it is in heaven. Work, dear friends! If there are any of you that are not working, *begin now;* if there are any of you not saved as yet, the Lord grant that when the Word is preached, you may be caught in it as in a net. We do throw it out once this morning; we hope to throw it again this evening. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Flee to Christ! Escape from the wrath to come! May the Spirit apply that word to thee, and lead thee to the place where high on Calvary with bleeding hands and feet the Saviour dies! One look at him and thou art saved. Look, sinner, and live! God save thee, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PORTION OF THE UNGODLY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it."—Isaiah xlvii. 14.

THIS text is part of a terrible description of God's judgment upon Babylon and Chaldea. The prophet had clearly written out the indictment of the Lord against that tyrannic people, and having proved their guilt he pronounces their sentence. He accused them of shewing no mercy to the inheritance of the Lord which, in his wrath, he had given into their hands. He charges them with pride and boastfulness, for Chaldea had said in her heart, "I am, and there is none beside me;" and Babylon had boasted, "I shall be a lady for ever; I shall see no sorrow." He testifies against their over-boldness and presumption; for they were given to pleasures and lived carelessly, expecting no ill. Thus said the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, "Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me." On account of these iniquities the destruction of Chaldea and Babylon was to be sudden, terrible, and complete. They were to be so utterly destroyed, that there should not be one single comfortable reflection connected with their state. There should be a fire to consume, but none to warm at; the burning should not be as when wood crackleth in the flame, when glowing ashes or a charred log may be left, but they should be as stubble, utterly consumed, without vestige or remembrance. How to the very letter this has been fulfilled let the modern discoveries of our great travellers tell. We want no better evidence of the truthfulness and divinity of Scripture than that which is furnished by prophecies which have been fulfilled, in lands concerning which we had no knowledge until of late. In the good providence of God there have been digged out from mounds of rubbish and heaps of decayed matter, slabs and stones, bearing in their carvings and inscriptions the most wonderful proofs that the Lord hath said, and hath fulfilled it; that he hath spoken, and it hath come to pass. O virgin daughter of Babylon! thou hast been made to sit on

the ground; there is no throne: O daughter of the Chaldeans! thou art no more tender and delicate, but thy nakedness is uncovered, and thy shame is seen. Sit thou silent and get thee into darkness, O daughter of Chaldea, for thou shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms.

It is a truth beyond dispute, that God's justice is not partial; that the description of the destruction which he awards to one class of sinners is a most fair picture of what he will do with others, for God hath not two or three ways of dealing with men in his justice. He hath not divers weights and divers measures, for these things are an abomination unto the Lord; he lays righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet, and he awardeth vengeance unto impenitent men by an established and an invariable rule. So, then, the ruin of Chaldea is to us, to-day, a representation and metaphorical description of the destruction which shall surely come upon impenitent sinners in that day when the Lord cometh out of his place to judge his enemies, and to ease himself of his adversaries.

It is with great trembling of heart that I come to this subject this morning. I have preached to you, lo, these many months in this Tabernacle, and I have delighted most to lift up my Master's cross, and to speak of the sufficiency of his blood, and of the fulness and freeness of his grace; but there are times when the Lord's hand lieth upon us, and we cannot refuse to speak of his terrible things in judgment. I feel to-day somewhat like the apostle when he said, "Knowing therefore *the terror of Lord*, we persuade men; . . . as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We believe that the Lord would not have said so much about the terrible things of his law and justice in Scripture—for he hath said more about them than any other subject, except the cross—if it had not been that there is a healthy use to be made of the vengeance which the Lord executeth upon the wicked, and that it will be both for the benefit of the righteous and for the awakening of the ungodly, sometimes to thunder out the sentence of the Lord. Be it, therefore, known unto you, O sons of men, that Ebal and Gerizim still stand, both the blessing and the curse, and either the one or the other must be yours.

To look at our text at first sight, the figures seem contradictory, for the first metaphor is, "They shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame;" but the next figure is apparently opposite to it: "There shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." We shall first *take the first figure*, and *then the second*, and thirdly, we shall close by endeavouring to dwell upon that important word with which the verse begins, which is put there like a hand in the margin to draw our attention to it, put there as a sort of signal hung out from heaven to tell us that there is something here upon which we ought to meditate with attention—I mean the word "*Behold!*"

I. With reference to the FIRST SENTENCE. You will see in reading it over that one of the most striking thoughts which it conveys to the mind is this, *that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted*. "They shall be as stubble." Nothing can be more easy than to kindle

stubble when it is fully dry. Strike the match, and the whole is on a blaze, for it bears within itself the materials of conflagration. So shall it be with impenitent sinners; it shall not be hard for God to visit them with vengeance, for they bear in their own bowels the material of their punishment. Oh, ungodly and impenitent man, there is that in thyself to-day which, let alone and permitted to ripen, will bring a hell upon thee. We do read in Scripture of the worm that dieth not, but that worm may be bred in the corruption of the sinner's lusts. We do read of the fire that never shall be quenched, but that fire will find its fuel in the hearts of lost spirits. We do read of the pit that hath no bottom, but sin has digged a pit for itself of fathomless depth. Sinner, the Lord needeth not to forge huge chains of iron, or build cells of darkness; he shall find in sinners the means of their punishment. He needeth not to make tormentors for thee, thou shalt be thine own executioner; from no bitter herbs need he distil thy draught of woe, thou thyself shalt mingle the cup which thou shalt drink; the racks of torture and the whips of torment thine own soul shall make. Hear me, man, *thou hast in thyself the power of memory*, and that power shall become a vehicle of sorrow to thee. Memory shall look back upon all thy past sins, and each of these, though now they seem to thee to be glossy as the scales of the serpent, shall sting thee and infuse into thy veins a worse poison than the viper ever knew. Thy memory shall recall the pleasures which thou didst once enjoy, but from which thou art banished for ever. Thy memory shall remind thee of the warnings thou didst once receive, and of the loving invitations which sounded in thine ears. When it is all over with thee, thy memory shall be stronger than it is now. Thou shalt have abundant leisure to recollect every circumstance of thy ruin; and thy memory, enlarged and strengthened, shall bring up the record of every neglected Sabbath, of every secret sin, ay, of those forgotten words of profanity, those secret iniquities which have been buried deep by time, but which shall be disinterred by the hand of eternity. Even now, at the very recollection of thy sin, thy cheek reddens with shame; but when memory getteth a voice that will be heard, then shalt thou indeed become pale, and thy knees shall knock together with very fear. The voice which saith, "Son, remember," is as terrible as the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of Almighty God. Thou hast, beside thy memory, *a conscience;* a conscience which thou hast striven to silence; but, even drugged and gagged as it is, it sometimes makes thee feel unhappy. When conscience smote the heart of Judas, you remember, he went out and hanged himself; but even the conscience of Judas was not so awake as will be the understanding and judgment of the sinner when condemned for ever. You will then find, sinner, that you cannot palliate the guilt of sin. You will then see sin in its true colours. You will not then be so apt at making excuses for it; the hand of truth shall rend all those rags away. You will find then that conscience will not be trifled with as it is now. Now you try to make it hold the scales with an unjust hand, but then it will deliberately award thee the due reward of thy deeds. Oh, man! thy memory and thy conscience shall be as two great millstones grinding thee to powder, or as two contending winds which shall with their tem-

pestuous strivings break thee in pieces, as the ships of Tarshish are broken by the north wind. Then, added to thy memory and to thy conscience, there shall come *thy increased knowledge*. Thou knowest enough now to leave thee without excuse, but then thy knowledge shall increase so as to leave thee without pretence of apology. Thou shalt then perceive the craft of the tempter who deluded thee. Thou shalt then see the blackness and the filthiness of sin as thou dost not see it now. Then shalt thou understand the greatness and the goodness of the God whom thou hast despised; thou shalt then discern the glory of the heaven which thou hast lost; thou shalt then begin to get an idea of that eternity which shall roll over thy head for ever. Thy knowledge shall swell; thy mind shall be strengthened; thou shalt grow; thou shalt have time enough for development; and all this increased light shall be but an increase of pain to thine eyes, and all this increase of wisdom shall be but a fresh source of misery for thine impenitent spirit. Believe me, man, I speak not thus that I may agitate thee merely for the sake of causing thee pain. God forbid I should thus do; but oh! if I can but arouse thee; if but some thunder-clap may awake thee ere thou hast slept thyself into hell, I shall be but too happy, and thou wilt not think my words too rough if they be but the means of bringing thee to the knowledge of Christ and of eternal life. Why, dost thou not know, man, that thy sin itself, without aught besides, will be enough to make thee as stubble to the flame? What is sin on earth? Is it not the mother of misery? Does a man ever do wrong without smarting for it? And those sins which are committed by the body, do they not entail, even on earth, their own punishment and doom? Then if sin in the bud here is bitter, what will it be when it is full-blown? Sin bears its punishment in its own bowels! Beside, *think of thy companions*. Shut up fifty drunkards and profane men together, and would they not soon make a hell for themselves without any interposition of divine power? What will it be when they are bound up in bundles; when the tens of thousands of those who obey not Christ shall find themselves in their own place? Oh, they will be as the flesh in the seething-pot, as the oil in the cauldron, as the faggots in the flame, as the coals in the fire. They shall be tormenting and being tormented; exciting one another to worse sins and direr blasphemies, and so increasing in each other the horror of the great darkness which results from separation from God and enmity against him. Thou shalt find, sinner, that God needeth send no devils to torment thee; thy sins shall be devils enough, thy companions in the pit shall be fiends enough, while thy memory, thy conscience, and thy knowledge, shall add such fuel to the flame that thou shalt indeed be as stubble cast into the fire.

That is the first truth clearly set forth in the text; but secondly; and solemnly, there is also another very plainly taught, namely, *that this punishment shall be most searching and terrible*. The metaphor of fire is used in Scripture because it is that which of all things causeth the most pain, and is the most searching and trying. One would suppose that death by fire must be one of the most painful that can be endured, and the pangs of burning reach to the very inwards of human life. The judgment of God is quick and powerful, it shall search

thine inwards; it shall reach the secret parts of thy belly; there shall be no part of thy frame or of thy heart that shall be free from its inroads. As fire consumes, and so reaches to the very essence of things, so shall the wrath to come reach to the very essence and subsistence of the soul. It shall be utter and overwhelming destruction which shall totally consume everything like joy and hope; it shall be a penetrating and a piercing of the very veins and the marrow of the man, and he shall not be able to escape therefrom. In Scripture this wrath to come is sometimes spoken of as the second death. Imagine a man dying, dying in pangs, and then rising again to die again, and so continually dying and yet living; expiring and yet breathing; perishing and yet existing; being dissolved, but yet being still in the body. You have now before you, then, the Biblical view of punishment—"the second death."

"To linger in eternal death,
Yet death for ever fly."

O soul, there are no words that human eloquence can ever find, however dreadful, that can reach the thousandth part of this great argument. No language that was ever uttered by the sternest prophet, no dreadful denunciations that ever flowed from the most burning lips, could ever attain to the tremendous terror of the wrath to come. I know men say of God's preachers that at times they speak too harshly. Sirs, we cannot speak half harshly enough. We tell you again, even weeping, that our poor feeble words cannot pourtray your danger; that we cannot ourselves even feel the danger as we would wish; but oh! if our lips had language, if we could but speak as sometimes we feel, we would move you till you should neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, until you had sought and found a refuge in the wounds of Christ. But we are so dull, or else your hearts are so hard, that when we speak we are like men who throw stones against a wall, and the stones come back upon us. Oh that instead thereof we might be this morning like the man who drew the bow at a venture, that the arrow may find a place in the joints of your harness, where your heart may be wounded with the arrows of the King!

Thirdly, when we look at our text we see most evidently that this destruction *will be most inevitable*, for the express words of the prophet are, "They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." There *is* hope now; there shall be no hope then. There is a new and living way now; there shall be no way then. The gate of mercy is open now; it shall be fast bolted for ever then. There is a ladder which reacheth from earth to heaven, but there is no ladder which reaches from hell to heaven. There is a great gulf fixed so that they who would pass from them to us cannot, neither could we go to them even if we should wish to venture there.

"Fix'd is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, 'tis then too late;
Justice has closed mercy's door,
And God's long-suffering is no more."

It is inevitable, we say. How can they avoid it? Man, hast thou strength to match with the Most High? Canst thou defy the Eternal God to battle, and go forth in thy weakness to meet the Lord God of Hosts? If so, *then* mightest thou hope to escape, but then thou wouldest be God thyself, and Jehovah would be no God. But thou art a puny man; a tooth-ache makes thee tremble; a little feather in the wind makes thee shake. Thou art a dying man; thou hast not power to keep thyself in life; thy breath is in thy nostrils, and wherein art thou to be accounted of? Certain is it, then, that by thy power thou wilt not be able to escape out of the power of the flame. And canst thou escape by thy wit? Why, thou hast not wit enough now to fly to Christ; thou hast not wisdom enough now to look to him; where, then, couldst thou find the wisdom that could invent another plan of salvation? The way of salvation by Christ is the only one that even God's wisdom has revealed to us. No! Fool, thou canst never find another, nor in hell wilt thou ever have the comfort of the hope of another, for there shalt thou understand that other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the Righteous. Or dost thou think to escape from God by hiding from his presence? Ah, whither wilt thou go? Couldst thou seek the bowels of the mountains, God is there, for he by his strength setteth them fast. If thou couldst dive into the depths of the sea to seek its deep cavernous recesses, even there would he reach thee; for his hand digged the channels of the ocean, and the strength of the sea is his also. Wouldst thou try to escape behind the clouds of darkness?

> "Darkness and light in this agree;
> Great God, they 're both alike to thee;
> Thine eyes can reach thy foes as soon
> Through midnight shades as blazing noon."

Or would you hope to fly beyond the range of the known universe? Man, he is there, for he filleth all things; and as it was said of the world in the days of the Cæsars—that it was only one great prison for the offender, so that go where he might Cæsar would track him—so shalt thou find the universe, even couldst thou escape from thy prison-house, to be but one great den where the Eternal eye should see thee, and the Eternal hand should reach thee. No, there is no escape, there is no deliverance, there is no means of avoiding sin's penalty when life is over. It is "Escape from the wrath to come" to-day; but then escape shall be a thing unknown.

These three truths stand clearly enough in our text: that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted, that it will be most dreadful in its character, and that it will be most inevitable. Do I speak to any here who say they do not believe it? Well, sir, I might only say this much to you: you profess to be a Christian nominally, do you not? and you say you live in a Christian land. Now, if so, if you do really believe this book to be the Word of God, then what can you say in denial of a future judgment? You must believe in the wrath to come, and in the general judgment. If not, turn Turk; say so at once; turn infidel;

or something of that kind; but never pretend again to be called a Christian, and live in a Christian land, and to be one of a Christian people; never profess that, while you object to that which is one of the fundamental truths of revelation—one of these great things about which there can be no dispute among those who receive this book as being a revelation from God. But, you will tell me again, that you think I speak too harshly of it. O sirs, not half so harshly as Isaiah; not half so plaintively as Jeremiah or Ezekiel; nor in such telling words as did my blessed Master. The Lord Jesus, though the most loving of spirits, was the most awful of preachers; and in his sermons, while there is everything that could melt and woo, there is no lack of the great and terrible thunderbolt, and the sounding forth of wrath to come, and the judgment which must await the impenitent. But again, you will say to me, wherefore speak you thus? why not dwell upon more pleasant themes? Because, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, I would be free of the blood of all men. What is it to win your applause to-day? or, what is it to gain your censure? Think you, sirs, that the breath of your applause is that on which we live? Fancy you that your opinion of our ministry is aught to us? Nay, not if God has sent us. If we be but what you may think us to be—impostors to please you—then, indeed, we should eschew all such subjects as these; we should be silent upon the hard sayings, and only prophesy smooth things. If we cared for popularity and such like, we should put these doctrines behind and cry, "Peace, peace, and sew pillows to your armholes." But, as God has sent us, and as we know we must give an account of our ministry, we tell you that if you perish, it shall not be for want of warning; and if you must go down to the pit, it shall be with your eyes open. If you will have your sins, you shall know that you must have the punishment with them; and if you will reject Christ, and if you will despise him, it shall be with this fact before you, that you did it wilfully, knowing what you did, knowing that those who do such things shall not escape the just vengeance of God. Oh! may God but convince you by the spirit of his truth and the solemn realities of the judgment, and the wrath to come, and we shall need no excuse, and no apology; but you would rather think us to be false traitors to your souls if we did not boldly speak on these matters.

II. But our text now changes its figure, and therefore we, still keeping to the same subject, change our mode of address. "Thus saith the Lord, There shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it;" by which is meant that there shall be nothing in hell that can give the sinner a moments comfort; nothing. Let me picture him there. The text says, "Behold," as though it were a thing to be seen with the eyes, and to be heard with the ears. Behold ye, then, for a moment, a spirit cast away from God, and receiving the due reward of its deeds. That spirit we say, has not a coal to warm at, nor a single thing that can yield it a ray of joy. The soul lifts its eye to *heaven;* there are the glorified spirits before the throne: but the sight of heaven affords no comfort to the lost in hell, for they say, "See what glory we have lost! what transcendant joys we have missed! What bliss we renounced,

that we might have the mirth of an hour, and the misery of eternity!" And as they look up, they shall see some of their old companions there; some who were once sinners like themselves, but who have sought for mercy through the precious blood, and having washed their robes in it, stand before the throne; and then the lost ones shall wring their hands, and curse the day in which they were born, that they should have rejected the mercy which they heard proclaimed in their hearing, while others were saved; and this shall tend to make the contrast of their condition appear the more dreadful. And then they will see there the poor tried saints of the Lord whom they were wont to mock at, and they will say, "Ah, there is the man whom we despised; he reigns and we suffer; Lazarus the beggar that lay at our gate full of sores, and was licked of the dogs, is there in Abraham's bosom, and we are tormented in this flame." Soul, the thought of heaven shall fan the flames of hell; the sense of the glory of the righteous shall depress the spirit with a double woe; and at the thought of what thou hast lost there shall ever be in thine ears a sound, "How art thou fallen, O thou son of the morning! How art thou cast down from heaven and brought into the depths of hell!" Nor when the spirit turns its eye around upon *hell itself* shall it see any reason for comfort there. I know there are some who say, "Well, if I be lost there will be many more that will be." Ah, but the multitude of the damned will be no consolation to them. The more there are, the more wretched shall they be; for mayhap, O reprobate, as thou shalt cast thine eye around, thou wilt meet the eyes of the woman whom thou didst lead astray, and she will curse thee to thy face. Perhaps, drunkard, as you are in your musings, you will see the lad whom you first took to the ale-house and taught to be a beast like yourself! Knaves, there shall ye meet your partners in your trade! There shall the ungodly see eyes which shall look upon them glaring like eyes of fire, which they can never avoid—the eyes of those whom they duped, and deceived, and misled. Most horrible of all must be the position of the professed minister of Christ who did not preach the Gospel, or who never cared for the souls of men. Oh, if such a lot should ever be mine! Think of the million eyes of those in perdition, everyone of them darting flames of fire at the false preacher who did not care for their souls! Better to be a devil than to be a preacher who was untrue to his Master; better to sink to hell as a prostitute, or as a thief, than to go to perdition as a clergyman or a minister who has not preached the Word of God with all his might! There shall be no comfort in the company that they find there; neither heaven nor hell shall yield them a coal to warm at; nor, indeed, will they be able to find any comfort *in themselves, nor in their thoughts.* Now, we sometimes find men who get comfort to themselves out of the doctrines of God's gospel. I have known a man come up to this house of prayer, and under some soul-searching sermon he has been alarmed, and he has gone home and sat with his finger upon his brow in thought, for a little season, and said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." His heart seemed ready to break, but at last he has risen up, and said, "If I am to be damned I shall be damned, and if I am to be saved I shall be saved," and

he has made the doctrine of predestination a coverlet in which he might wrap himself and sleep comfortably. Souls, ye shall not be able to do that then; in the world to come, no doctrine will be able to yield you a moment's comfort; instead of it, your thoughts shall be a case of knives, cutting and piercing your souls, and every truth you have ever known, ay, and every falsehood that you have once believed shall be spikes upon the unresting bed where ye seek to find some peace. Indeed, there is never any real joy to the sinner here, when his mind is awake, and certainly there will be none hereafter. Why, the greatest torture to which you could put some men, would be to make them think. How do some of our men live? They drink hard and go to bed drunk, they wake up in the morning, and they are very low and miserable, and then they must have a little drink again to lift their spirits up, and, when they have lost their reason, they get happy; but if they would sit down and think awhile over their present estate, they would kill themselves. This is how many an one has been made a suicide. When they have had a moment's sober thought, they have looked at themselves; and if this on earth has brought men to the halter and to the knife, what will it do in hell when, for ever, for ever, and for ever, their thoughts shall revolve, and revolve, and revolve again upon sin and its punishment, upon grace despised, upon mercy rejected; upon an angry God, and upon the all-devouring wrath which has come forth from his presence?

But again: the sinner shall certainly find *no comfort in God.* Mark you, if the sinner could say *there* what he now says *here*, he would have comfort in God; for now he says, "If God is to treat me thus in the world to come, it will be unjust." Ah, you will not think so *then*, for this shall be the sting of it all—"I deserve it; I deserve it; I brought this on myself!" You may mutter now about the hardness of God, and call him a cruel taskmaster, but when your better sense gets the upper hand, as it will do, then you will be compelled against your will to acknowledge that he is not too severe; that he is not too hard with you. Oh, if the lost spirits in hell could but believe God to be unjust, their pains would cease; but it is the conviction that he is awfully just, and that every pang and every throe they have wilfully brought upon themselves by despising him and running in a false way—it is that conviction which will be the hell of hell. Nay, more, sinner; when you are there, you will not be able to say that God has broken a single promise that he has ever made to you. If there be a soul in hell that could say, "I sought the Lord, but he would not be found of me,"—if he could say—"I did trust Christ, but he did not save me;"—if he could say, "I did seek and pray, but he would not hear;"—if he could say, "I did humble myself and leave my sin; I did come to him and say, Jesus, Saviour, pity me; have mercy upon me through thy precious blood;"—if he could say that and then add, "And yet I was not saved,"—then that man would have no hell, because he would always have some excuse. But there is not one among you that will ever have an excuse. If you are lost, it will be because you did not pray; and if you perish, it will be because you did not repent; and if you are cast away, it will be because you would not believe in Christ. You shall find no comfort in any broken promises; but

those which are now the hope and joy of the penitent, shall then be your dread and fear. Moreover, you sometimes comfort yourselves with the thought that you cannot help it, that it must be so, and therefore you are comforted in it; but you will get no comfort in that thought in the world to come, for then you will clearly perceive that your sin was wilfully undertaken, that you did it to please yourself, that you followed your own wayward, headstrong will, instead of bowing to the will of God. Oh! there is nothing in God, nothing in his promises, nothing in his threatenings, nothing in his Word, which will at the last great day yield a coal for the sinner to warm at, or a fire by which he can sit down. It will be blank, black despair, and not a solitary ray of light shall come from God to that soul.

But further: the sinner shall then find no comfort *in the past*. I know he will look back upon his past joys, but what will he say of them? He will call himself ten-thousand fools to think that for such little paltry joys as those, he should have lost eternal bliss. The drunkard will doubtless remember his cups, but it will be to call himself an idiot to think for a little drink and the sweet excitement of his palate for an hour, he should have damned himself to all eternity. Ah, and the very thought of those enjoyments will act as a foil to set forth the present state in which he is; he will have the sin without the pleasure of it; the dregs, but not the wine; the bitterness, the worm-wood, and the gall, but not the froth upon the cup; *that* he has had in time, but now he has to drink the bitterness to all eternity. As he looks back, instead of comfort, O sirs, what agony the past will give him! Should I be so unhappy as to have in my congregation this morning one man who shall at last perish, I do not doubt that this present assembly will flash before his eyes. Ah, then he will say "I remember how the preacher spoke; whatever he did not say, he did warn me to flee from the wrath to come; however feebly he put it, I ought not to have thought of that, but I should have remembered the truth and my interest in it." Oh, by these tears which these eyes must shed, and by the emotions which this heart does feel for your soul's salvation, I conjure you do not remain in such a state that when you die you will have to say, "He cared more for me than I cared for myself; he thought more of my conversion than I ever thought of it, and wished more to see me brought to eternal life than I have ever done." Oh, let not the past become so bitter as this! Young man, shall your mother's tears and your father's prayers, when they sought to bring you to Christ, make a part of the bitter remembrances of eternity? And you, my dear hearers, who sit here constantly, must these seats cry out against you? Must this house of prayer bear witness against you? Must I appear at the great bar of God, and say "My Lord, it is just; I did warn them; they *were* prayed for; they *were* wept over; they *were* wooed; as a mother loves her children, so has my soul loved them?" Must it be so? God forbid; but it must except ye repent. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and what remaineth then, but that he must be driven from the presence of God to the place where hope can never come? God have mercy on

you, for if he do not, ye shall find not a coal to warm at in the recollections of the past.

Then when that soul is lost, it certainly shall find no coal to warm at in its *condition in the present*. Now, ungodly men get some degree of comfort from the very ruin of their state; I mean this—some of them are presumptuous. They say, "What care I? I will defy all this. Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" and this gives some sort of comfort here; but you will not be able to face it out thus in eternity. The most brazen among the ungodly crew shall then hide his face for shame; like Belshazzar, his knees shall knock together, and his loins be loosed; then shall the stout-hearted fail, and the soul of the mighty shall be bowed down. Ignorance, too, gives many men comfort here. They do not know their state, and so they are at peace; but you will have no ignorance then: you will know, even as you are known, so that this also shall be taken away. Here also stupidity often gives men peace. They will not feel; you may hammer them with the law, but they are not moved; you may preach as though you would move a heart of stone, but they are not moved. Ah, but hearts of stone shall be no more in hell; they shall be hearts of flesh to suffer, though not hearts of flesh to repent. Then the stout heart shall be taken away, and the proud spirit shall quail, so that there shall be nothing in the present condition of the lost that can yield them any comfort.

Nor will there be anything to comfort them in their *future condition*. They may look on through the long vista of the eternal ages, and never see the shadow of a hope. For ever, for ever, for ever; wave after wave; stream after stream of sorrow—for ever, for ever, for ever! Oh! it would make holiday in hell, if it could be proved that the pains were not eternal, but it stands, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." No hope! When a woman has no hope, we wonder not that she seeks the cold river; when a man has no hope, we wonder not that he is taken to the asylum as a lunatic; but when the soul has no hope, then it will be death and madness combined for ever, for ever, for ever!

III. And now our text bids us "BEHOLD," therefore I pray ye, beloved, turn not away your eyes from this meditation. Children of God, behold it; it will make you grateful.

> "Oh, were it not for grace Divine,
> This case so dreadful had been mine."

Does not the thought of the misery from which you have escaped make you love your Saviour? And oh, Christian, will it not make you love poor sinners too? Do you not feel as if you wanted to be doing something to pluck them as brands from the burning? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, do you not wish to be the saviours of men? Wake, ye sleepers! Woe unto you if you can think of these things and still be quiet! "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion," who can see men perish without doing anything to rescue them! Woe unto you! Woe unto you! How can ye be the servants of God?

But specially, you that are unconverted, the text says, "Behold." It is a gloomy subject for you to think upon, but better to think of it now than to think of it for ever. Better to weep the tears of penitence than the tears of despair, and better the pangs of conviction than the pangs of condemnation. Better for a little season to lose your mirth and your merriment to get heaven and eternal life, than it is to have your joys now and then to be driven for ever from the presence of the Lord. I am about to close the sermon, and you will go your way, and there will be some few blessed by the Holy Spirit, in whom God's Word will abide; but oh! for the many of you, for the many of you, we do but preach in vain; we do but speak to ears that are dull of hearing, and to hearts that will not feel. If I have told you what is false, reject it; laugh at it: if I have tried to stir you up about a theme which does not concern you, turn on your heel and go your way. But oh, sirs, if these things be real, if they be true, if there be but a step between us and death, I conjure you by the love you bear to your own selves, if not by any care for God or Christ, to meditate upon these things; and may God lead you out of self to Christ; away from your sin to him who is the great sin-bearer, that you may find in him eternal life. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Why will ye perish? Why will ye go down to destruction? Wherefore will ye make your bed in hell, and dwell with everlasting burnings? God turn you! May God turn you now, and of his grace save you, and to him shall be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

RESURRECTION—CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 20TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."—1 Cor. xv. 20.

THE fact of Christ's resurrection is exceedingly well attested. It was needful that it should be beyond dispute, since it lies at the very basis of our holy faith; it is consoling to think that it is so; for thus our foundation standeth most secure. Our Lord was careful to show himself after his resurrection to those who, having known him before his decease, would be able to answer for the identity of his person. Had he merely showed himself to strangers who had not known him before, they might have been able to say that they had seen such an one, but they could not have affirmed that he was the selfsame person who had been buried; but showing himself to men like Thomas, and bidding them put their fingers into the print of the nails and thrust their hand into his side, he gave to men the most absolute proofs of his resurrection, and received from the most competent witnesses the most assured evidence that no deception had been practiced. "Handle me, and see that it is I myself," was a challenge of identity all the more conclusive because it was addressed to the men who had known him intimately during the whole period of his ministry. The witnesses were men who had nothing to gain by giving their evidence, but everything to lose; they were unlearned men, utterly unfitted to found or promulgate an imposture, and their evidence was so clearly borne out by the absence of the body of Christ from the tomb that it was found necessary to invent an impossible story in order to account for that absence. The eye-witnesses were just the right men, such as prudence would select if we had now to hand down such a transaction to future faith and history. Our Lord, to put the matter beyond controversy, took care to appear many times, and to numerous companies. Our apostle gives a summary of those appearances which had most fully come under his own notice. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And

last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."—1 Cor. xv. 5—8. From the evangelistic reports we are led to believe that Christ appeared no less than twelve times to his disciples; for some of these instances which the apostle Paul mentions under one head, may include two or three appearances; as, for instance, "then of the twelve" may denote his two visits to the apostles; for you remember he first appeared to them when Thomas was absent, and afterwards when Thomas was present. Isaac Ambrose gives a summary of these appearances to this effect. He shewed himself to Mary Magdalen apart, then to all the Maries, next to Simon Peter alone, afterwards to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus; to the ten apostles when the doors were shut; to all the disciples when Thomas was with them; to Peter, John, and others while fishing in the lake of Tiberias; to five hundred brethren at once; to James, the Lord's brother; to the eleven disciples in Galilee; to all the apostles and disciples at Olivet before his ascension; and lastly to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. There may even have been more than these, for we have no proof that all his appearances are on record. Enough, however, we have, and more would answer no useful end.

So clear is the evidence of Christ's resurrection, that when Gilbert West—a celebrated infidel—selected this subject as the point of attack, sitting down to weigh the evidence and to digest the whole matter, although filled with prejudice, he was so startled with the abundant witness to the truth of this fact, that he expressed himself a convert, and has left as a heritage for coming generations a most valuable treatise, entitled "Observations on the Resurrection of Christ." He laid down certain laws of evidence to begin with, and then went to the matter as though he had been a lawyer examining the *pros* and *cons* of any matter in dispute; and this, which is the fundamental doctrine of our faith, seemed to him so exceedingly clear that he renounced his unbelief, and became a professor of Christianity.

Does it not strike you that very many events of the greatest importance recorded in history, and commonly believed, could not in the nature of things have been witnessed by one-tenth as many as the resurrection of Christ? The signing famous treaties affecting nations—the births of princes—the remarks of cabinet ministers—the projects of conspirators—and the deeds of assassins—any and all of these have been made turning points in history, and are never questioned as facts, and yet but few could have been present to witness them. I venture to assert that even the most recent political event, which has caused so much sorrow to our whole nation—the death of the lamented Prince Albert—had not nearly so many witnesses as the resurrection of Christ; that if it came to a matter of dispute, it were far easier to prove that Christ is risen, than to prove that the Prince is dead; if it came to the counting of the witnesses who saw the Prince die, and could attest the identity of the body now resting in the royal vault with that which they saw fever-stricken in the bed-chamber, it strikes me they would turn out to be far fewer than those who saw the Lord after he had risen, and were persuaded that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, and had burst the bonds of death. If this fact is to be denied, there is an end

to all witness, and we have said deliberately what David said in haste: "All men are liars;" and from this day forth every man must become so sceptical of his neighbour, that he will never believe anything which he has not himself seen; the next step will be to doubt the evidence of his own senses; to what further follies men may then rush, I will not venture to predict. We believe that the very best attested fact in all history is the resurrection of Christ. Historical doubts concerning the existence of Napoleon Buonaparte, or the stabbing of Julius Cæsar, or the Norman Conquest, would be quite as reasonable as doubts concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. None of these matters have such witnesses as those who testify of Him—witnesses who were manifestly truthful, since they suffered for their testimony, and most of them died ignominious and painful deaths as the results of their belief. We have more and better evidence for this fact than for anything else which is written in history, either sacred or profane. Oh! how should we rejoice, we who hang our salvation wholly upon Christ, that beyond a doubt it is established that, "now is Christ risen from the dead."

But you may ask the question at the outset, "Why is it that the resurrection of Christ is of so much importance?" Upon it we have said that the whole system of Christianity rests; for "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins."—1 Corinthians xv. 14, 17. The *divinity* of Christ finds its surest proof in his resurrection, since the apostle tells us in the first chapter of the Romans, at the fourth verse, that Christ was "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It would not be unreasonable to doubt his deity if he had not risen. Moreover, Christ's *sovereignty* also depends upon his resurrection for Scripture affirms: "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."—Romans xiv. 9. Again, *our justification*, that choice blessing of the covenant, hangs upon Christ's resurrection. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."—Romans iv. 25. Nay, more, our very *regeneration* depends upon his resurrection, for Peter, speaking by the Holy Ghost, exclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."—1 Peter i. 3. And most certainly our *ultimate resurrection* rests here; for "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."—Romans viii. 11. If Christ be not risen, then shall we not rise; but if he be risen, then they who are asleep in Christ, have not perished, but in their flesh shall surely behold their God. It would not be difficult to enlarge this catalogue. The fact is, that the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together.

It is time to pass on, and come more fully to the text. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that

slept." Let me draw your attention, first of all, to *the pictures here given of the death of the saints.* Further, we shall observe *the singular relationship which exists between Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of the saints;* and ere we leave the subject, we shall *suggest certain practical considerations arising from the doctrine before us.*

I. First of all, then, THE TEXT GIVES A VIEW OF DEATH VERY COMMON IN SCRIPTURE, BUT NOT SUFFICIENTLY ACCEPTED AMONG US.

The representations of the text, I take it, are twofold. Death is here compared to a sleep—"The firstfruits of them that *slept;*" but moreover, you will plainly perceive it is compared also to a sowing; for Christ is pictured as being "*the firstfruits.*" Now, to a harvest there must have been a sowing. If the resurrection of Christ be the firstfruits, then the resurrection of the elect must be looked upon as a harvest, and death would therefore be symbolized by a sowing.

1. First, then, we have before us the picture so commonly employed in Scripture of *death as a sleep.* We must not make a mistake by imagining that *the soul* sleeps. Such a heresy was once received by a large number of persons: it has long ago been rejected, as being inconsistent, as well with natural as with revealed religion. The soul undergoes no purgatorial purification or preparative slumber in the limbo of the fathers; beyond a doubt, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," is the whisper of Christ to every dying saint. They sleep in Jesus, but their souls sleep not; they are before the throne of God, praising him day and night in his temple—singing hallelujahs to him who has washed them from their sins in his blood. It is the body that sleeps in its lonely bed of earth, beneath the coverlet of grass, with the cold clay for its pillow.

But what is this sleep? We all know that the surface idea connected with sleep is that of *resting;* that is doubtless just the thought which the Spirit of God would convey to us. The eyes of the sleeper ache no more with the glare of light or with the rush of tears; his ears are teased no more with the noise of strife or the murmur of suffering; his hand is no more weakened by long protracted effort and painful weariness; his feet are no more blistered with journeyings to and fro along a rugged road; there is rest for aching heads, and strained muscles, and overtaxed nerves, and loosened joints, and panting lungs, and heavy hearts, in the sweet repose of sleep. On yonder couch, however hard, the labourer shakes off his toil, the merchant his care, the thinker his difficulties, and the sufferer his pains. Sleep makes each night a Sabbath for the day. Sleeps shuts too the door of the soul, and bids all intruders tarry for awhile, that the royal life within may enter into its summer garden of ease. From the sweat of his brow man is delivered by sleep, and the thorn and thistle of the curse cease to tear his flesh. So is it with the body while it sleeps in the tomb. The weary are at rest; the servant is as much at ease as his lord. The galley-slave no more tugs the oar, the negro forgets the whip. No more the worker leans on his spade, no more the thinker props his pensive head. The wheel stands still, the shuttle is not in motion, the hand which turned the one and the fingers which threw the other are quiet also. The body and all its members find the tomb a couch of

sufficient length and breadth. The coffin shuts out all disturbance, labour, or effort. The toilworn believer quietly sleeps, as does the child weary with its play, when it shuts its eyes and slumbers on its mother's breast. Oh! happy they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. We would not shun toil, for though it be in itself a curse, it is when sanctified a blessing; yet toil for toil's sake we would not choose, and when *God's* work is done we are too glad to think that *our* work is done too. The mighty Husbandman, when we have fulfilled our day, shall bid his servants rest upon the best of beds, for the clods of the valley shall be sweet to them. Their repose shall never be broken until he shall rouse them up to give them their full reward. Guarded by angel watchers, curtained by eternal mysteries, resting on the lap of mother earth, ye shall sleep on, ye heritors of glory, till the fulness of time shall bring you the fulness of redemption.

Moreover, we look upon sleep as a season of *forgetfulness*, and in this too it images death. "Their memory and their love are lost;" they are "alike unknowing and unknown." Their sons come to honour, and they know it not; or their seed degenerates, but it causes them no grief. Let armies march over their tombs—their tramp shall disturb them no more than the crawling of a worm; let the vault of heaven blaze with the flaming bolts of God, let the earth shake at the awful voice of the thunder, let the cedars be broken, let the rocks be shivered, let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; there, under their green hillocks they slumber as peacefully as though it were a soft summer evening when the hum of a bee or the flitting of a fly were the only sounds. The dead may be remembered by their kinsfolk; but they remember not. They have forgotten the joys and the sorrows, the peace and the strife, the defeats and the victories of time. The soul forgets not, and we have no reason to believe that the glorified are ignorant of what is going on below. We have far more presumptive evidence that they "know even as they are known"—that they still have communion with the living Church on earth, and that the Church victorious is not sundered from the Church militant in point of knowledge; but as to their bodies, what do their bodies know? What does the human organism now understand? Take up the skull; see if there be memory there. Look at the place where once the heart was, and see if there be any trace of present emotion. Gather into your hands the bones; see if they are still obedient to muscles which could be moved at will as passing events might affect the mind. Try to discover any live coals amid your heap of ashes, a heart still quivering with delight, or an eye moistened by a sorrow. These dry bones are forgetful indeed; steeped in lethè these decayed skeletons know nothing.

But yet once more: sleep *has its intent and purpose*. We do not close our eyes without aim and open them again without benefit. The old cauldron of Medea has its full meaning in sleep. In the old tradition we read of Medea the enchantress casting the limbs of old men into her cauldron that they might come forth young again. Sleep does all this in its fashion. We are old enough oftimes, after hours of

thinking and of labour, but we sleep, and we wake refreshed, as though we were beginning a new life. The sun begins a new day when he rises from the eastern sea; and we begin a new life of renewed vigour when we rise from the couch of quiet rest.

"Tir'd nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

Now, such is the effect of the body's visit to its grave. The righteous are put into their graves all weary and worn; but such they will not rise. They go there with the furrowed brow, the hollowed cheek, the wrinkled skin; they shall wake up in beauty and glory. The old man totters thither, leaning on his staff; the palsied comes there, trembling all the way; the halt, the lame, the withered, the blind, journey in doleful pilgrimage to the common dormitory, but they shall not rise decrepit, deformed, or diseased, but strong, vigorous, active, glorious, immortal. The shrivelled seed, so destitute of form and comeliness, shall rise from the dust a beauteous flower. A green blade all fresh and young shall spring up where before there was the dried decayed grain. Well said the holy martyrs, when their limbs were being torn away,—"We cheerfully resign these members to the God who gave them to us." Our members are not ours to hold or lose, no torment can rob us of them in reality; for when we wake up in Christ's likeness it will not be as halt or lame, but full of strength and vigour, more comely than earthly sons of men. The winter of the grave shall soon give way to the spring of resurrection and the summer of glory. Blessed is death, since it answers all the ends of medicine to this mortal frame, and through the divine power disrobes us of the leprous rags of flesh, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption.

One reflection must not escape our notice—this is not a dreamy slumber. The sleep of some men is much more weayring than refreshing. Unbidden thoughts steal away the couch from under them and throw them on the rack. The involuntary action of the mind prevents us at times from taking rest in sleep. But not so with the dear departed. In that sleep of death no dreams can come; nor do they feel a terror in undressing for that last bed, for no phantoms, visions, or terrors by night shall vex their peace. Their bodies rest in the profoundest slumber. It is sleep indeed, such as the Lord giveth, for "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

Nor ought we ever to look upon it as a hopeless sleep. We have seen persons sleep who have been long emaciated by sickness, when we have said, "That eye will never open again; he will sleep himself from time into eternity;" we have felt that the sleep was the prelude of the eternal slumber, and might probably melt into it. But it is not so here. They sleep a healthy sleep—not thrown over them by death-bearing drugs, nor fell disease, they sleep to wake, and not to die the second death. They sleep to wake—to wake in joyous fellowship, when the Redeemer stands in the latter day upon the earth. Sleep on, then, ye servants of the Lord, for if ye sleep, ye shall do well; indeed, concerning these departed ones we may well speak of taking rest in sleep.

Dear friends, ought not this view of death as a sleep to prevent our

looking upon it in so repulsive a light? I know we like not to look at dead bodies; we are afraid to touch them; some foolish people do not like to remain in the same house with a corpse, at least alone, or at night. There is a certain horror connected with the ruins of our earthly house. Did you ever feel horror at a sleeping child? Do you feel any sort of dread of your sleeping mother, or your slumbering husband or wife? Have you felt it anything dreadful to draw back the curtain of the little cot and to gaze upon the sweet young face when the eyes are closed in happy sleep? Oh, wherefore, then, should you think it dreadful to look upon the sleeping believer's brow? True, there are marks of decay which are not pleasant to nature; but are they not the footprints of the retreating enemy and signs that the corruptible is passing away to make room for incorruption? Do not those very marks which mar the form betoken that the ragged smoke-blacked tent of Kedar is being pulled down that the curtains of Solomon may glitter in their stead, and that the soul may dwell there as in a fair pavilion? Oh, look not upon the departed as though they were dead, but speak ye of them as Christ did of his friend—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;" let the ears of your faith hear the Master say, "And *I* come that I may awake him out of his sleep." Let not the grave seem more abhorrent to you than your bedchamber.

Let there be by no means such a view of the death of the redeemed as to wish them back again. Would you wish, when your friend has long been in excruciating pain, and at last falls into sleep, to shake him in his bed, to awake him, to tell him some idle tale? No; you have been watching for hours, and you have said, "Oh, that he could have a little sleep! Physician! can you not give some sleep to this poor tortured frame?" And at last you have said, "Thank God, his eyelids drop; speak softly; tread lightly; he sleeps!" And you have been afraid even to let your foot fall upon the ground, lest you should break the sleep. And what! after all the pain, the suffering, the temptation, and the trial of your friends, do you wish to awake them? Rather I think you say, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye ask not that he should be stirred up or awakened until Jesus please; let him sleep on while the night lasts; and then, at the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, he shall wake in the morning when the sun has risen upon the earth.

2. The text affords us, however, a second figure. *Death is compared to a sowing.* The black mould has been ploughed; certain dry-looking seeds are put into a basket, and the husbandman takes his walk, and with both hands he scatters right and left, broad-cast, his handfuls of seeds. Where have they gone? They have fallen into the crevices of the earth; the clods will soon be raked over them, and they will disappear. So is it with us. Our bodies here are like those dry grains of wheat. There is nothing very comely in a grain of wheat, nor yet in our bodies. Indeed, Paul calls them "these vile bodies." Death comes: we call him a reaper—mark, I call him a sower—and he takes these bodies of ours, and sows us broad-cast in the ground. Go ye to the cemetery, and see his fields; mark how thickly he has sown his furrows! how closely he has drilled the

rows! what narrow headlands has he left! We say, they are there *buried;* I say, they are *sown.* They are dead, say we; no, say I, they are put into the earth—but they shall not abide there for ever. In some sense these holy bodies of the just are dead; "For that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die," but it is not a death unto death, but rather a death leading unto life. That mouldering body is no more dead than yonder decaying seed which you have just now disturbed in its bed of earth, it shall soon spring up again and thou shalt see a harvest. We do lose sight, it is true, of those who have gone from us, for there must be a burial, how else can the seed grow? Truly it is never a pleasant sound, that rattle of the clay upon the coffin-lid, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," nor to the farmer, for it's own sake, would it be a very pleasant thing to put his grain into the dull cold earth; yet I trow no farmer ever weeps when he sows his seed. We have not heard the husbandman groan and sigh when they scatter their baskets of seed-corn; rather, we have heard them cheerly singing the song of mirth, and have heard them anticipate the reaper's joy, when they have trodden the furrows. Have ye seen them robed in black, or wearing the dull weeds of mourning, while they tread the brown ridges of the fertile earth? We grant you that in itself considered, it were no wise or gladsome thing to bury precious grain amid dead clods of earth, but viewed in the light of harvest, since there must be a burial, and after the burial a rottenness and a decay, both of these lose all traces of sorrow, and become prophets of joy. The body must become worms' meat; it must crumble back to its former elements, for "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," but this is no more our sorrow, for "In Christ shall all be made alive."

Nor will we even mourn because of the stench and rottenness of death. The life-germ in the grain of wheat must begin to feed on the food laid up in store for it; a kind of decay must seem to take place; but I trow no farmer ever weeps because the seed which he has put into the ground has swollen and lost its former size and shape. He mourns if he be told the seed he has put into the ground is undergoing the death that is necessary for its future up-growth, but he rejoiceth in patient hope. Wherefore, then, ye worms, should ye force me weep? and why, corruption, shouldst thou make me sigh? Rather will I call ye my brothers and my mother, for your kindly glooms are but part of the road to immortality.

After sowing and decay comes an up-springing, and the farmer soon perceives, in a few short weeks, the little green blade the son of the buried life. So with the dead. There is soon to come, and how soon we do not know—the up-springing; we shall thus perceive that they were not lost, but only committed to the grave, in readiness for "the redemption"—put there that our souls might, when re-united, receive them in a better and nobler form.

Dear friends, if such be death—if it be but a sowing, let us have done with all faithless, hopeless, graceless sorrow. "The granary is empty," says the farmer. Yes, but he does not sigh over it; for the seed is put into the ground, in order that the granary may be filled again.

"Our family circle has been broken," say you. Yes, but only broken that it may be re-formed. You have lost a dear friend: yes, but only lost that friend that you may find him again, and find more than you lost. They are not lost; they are sown; and as "light is sown for the righteous," so are the righteous sown for light. The stars are setting here to rise in other skies to set no more. We are quenched like torches only to be re-lit with all the brilliancy of the sun.

II. We will not tarry longer on this point, but rapidly carry you to the second—viz., THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND THAT OF BELIEVERS.

The text tells us that Christ is "the firstfruits of them that slept." Some professors take very great delight in the hope that they may be "alive and remain" at the coming of Christ, and so may never die. I confess I greatly rejoice in the hope that Christ will come; but the prospect of never dying has no sort of charms for me, for methinks those who never die lose a great privilege; at least, to our comprehension it seems so, for Christ is "the firstfruits of them *that slept*." Oh, then, it is a blessed thing to sleep, that Christ may be to us in the relationship of first-fruits. They who never die can hardly know so much of fellowship with Christ in his death as those who fall asleep in Jesus. Whereas, you and I, who feel the pin's prick of the dart of death, will be able to say in eternity, "I too passed through the grave. He was with me passing through the valley of the shadow of death; I, in my own proper person, knew a death and a resurrection too, even as did my Lord, which you who never died can only understand by hearsay and report." Oh! happy they who die. They that are alive and remain shall not precede them in any privilege or honour.

But what is meant by Christ being "the firstfruits?" You will recollect that there was a feast of the Jews called the feast of firstfruits, when the first sheaf was brought out from the harvest as a token of the whole, and first of all heaved upward as a heave-offering, and then waived to and fro as a waive-offering, being thus dedicated to God, in testimony of the gratitude of the holders of the soil for the harvest which the Lord had given. Now, this happened on the first day of the week. You will remember that the Passover was celebrated first; then came a Sabbath-day; then after that came the feast of firstfruits. So Christ died on the Passover day; he, as the slaughtered Lamb of God, of God's Passover, died exactly at the Passover season; the next day was the Sabbatic rest: Christ's body therefore tarried in the grave; then early in the morning of the first day, ere it was yet light, while yet the sun was rising upon the earth, Christ rose—on the morning of the feast of the firstfruits; and so he is revealed as the blessed wave-sheaf preceding and consecrating the whole harvest.

But the uninstructed believer asks me to explain at greater length. Beloved, remember then, *that Christ was the first that rose from the dead* in order of *time*. You will mention to me Enoch and Elijah. We answer that they never died, but were translated that they should not see death. You will remind me of the widow's son who was raised by Elijah, and the young man restored by Elisha. Yes, but these are

not cases in point. They were raised, but they died again. All the instances in the Old Testament are only temporary restorations, and so also those in the New. In no instance, save in that of Lazarus, were any of them buried at all, so that none of them came out of their graves; and even in the case of Lazarus, he lived but to die; he had a furlough from the tomb; but at the expiration of the due time, his body was yielded to the appointed keeper. Christ was the first who really rose no more to die. He leads the vanguard through the dark defile, and his brow first salutes the light of the plains of heaven beyond the gloom. Men admire the man who is first to discover a new country; the name of Columbus shall ring in the ears of ages, because he first crossed the stormy sea to win another world; the name of the man who climbed the mountains, and first saw the broad Pacific with exceeding great joy, is well remembered. Oh, then, sing it in songs, sound it with voice of trumpet to the ends of the earth,—Christ is the first who returned from the jaws of death to tell of immortality and light.

He is also *first in point of cause;* for as he comes back from the grave he brings all his followers behind him in one glorious train. We read of Hercules in the old mythology descending into Hades and bringing up his friend. Verily, went Christ thither, and he gave no sop to Cerberus, but cut off his head. Like a sun he suddenly flashed upon the night of death and scattered its darkness. Like Samson in Gaza, he tore up the gates of death and carried away the bars of the grave. Like David, he delivered his flock out of the jaw of the lion, and took the monster by the beard and slew him. Like Abraham, he returned triumphantly from the slaughter of the kings. Like Moses, he led his Israel out of the house of bondage. With ten thousand times ten thousand he came forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Who is this that cometh up from the land of darkness—from the gates of the grave? Who is this that draggeth behind him captive the grim prince of the realms of death-shade? Who is this, so strong, so mighty, that adamantine walls give way before him, and gates of brass are broken in twain? 'Tis he! 'tis he! 'Tis the selfsame conqueror who erst came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. The victory on the cross is succeeded by a victory in the tomb. He who won heaven for earth when he died, wins heaven for the dead when he descends into the grave. Sound ye his praises; tell ye his victories; let heaven itself take up the strain; he hath "led captivity captive," rifled the grave, and robbed death of his sting. He is the death of death and hell's destruction.

But then again, he is first *in point of pledge.* The firstfruits were a pledge of the harvest. "Whence, O husbandman, whence hast thou brought yonder sheaf?" "I gathered it," saith he, "from the fields that are waving with plenty." "Verily," saith the priest, "the harvest is plenteous this year, and full and many are the ears for this sheaf beareth good witness." Whence, O power divine, didst thou bring this glorious sheaf, this body of our Lord, so bright and glorious? Whence didst thou bring it, O Spirit of the Lord? Is there a harvest of many shocks of corn such as this? "Ay, verily," saith the teacher; "this is but one among many, the firstborn among many brethren." We know right

well that there must be a glorious harvest of resurrection-forms and immortal bodies, since Jesus Christ, clothed in immortality and light, walks among the sons of men the pledge of all the rest.

He was, again, the firstfruits, not only as a pledge, but as the *representative* of the whole. When the firstfruit sheaf had been waved before God, it was considered that all the harvest had been brought into the sanctuary; it was all dedicated, all consecrated, from that very hour. So when Christ rose as a heave-offering from the sepulchre, and when he went about among the people as a wave-offering, moving among his disciples, he consecrated the whole harvest. All the righteous dead were virtually risen in him; all the chosen members of his body had a resurrection when their head appeared as "risen indeed;" and moreover, they were all dedicated and consecrated to God, by his dedication as the firstfruits to the Most High. Triumph, ye children of God, triumph in this. You are risen in Christ to-day. We see not the saints as yet ascended; rather, we see their bones dried in the valley, and we ask, "Can these dry bones live?" But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and we know that he is risen, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and by faith we perceive that as our covenant head he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places even in him, for he is the head over all things to his Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Never doubt, believer, of your resurrection, since the second Adam was loosed from the bands of the tomb.

III. And now, lastly, we will close by noticing THE INFLUENCE OF THE WHOLE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION AND CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH IT UPON OUR OWN SPIRITS.

First, let us look well to *the holiness of our bodies.* "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." We do not believe in consecrated Churches; we think it altogether absurd to talk of holy bricks and mortar; but we do know by Scriptural authority that the body is holy—that the body of the saint is as really holy as men pretend that Churches and temples may be. Now, brethren, if our eyes look upon vanity, we have defiled the windows of God's house; if our tongues speak that which is evil, have we not desecrated the gates of the temple of the Lord? Let us see to it that our feet carry us nowhere but where our Master can go with us, lest the pillars of our house become our destruction, like the pillars of the Philistine temple of old. Let us mind that our hands be outstretched for naught but that which is pure and lovely, lest like Belshazzar we profane the vessels of the Lord's temple. They who pamper the body, they who look to its adornment, they who regard its physical health more than its moral purity, forget the higher end of their being; for what is beauty after all? what the comeliness which human skill can give? See you that skull? "Go, take that to my lady's chamber, and tell her, though she paint herself an inch thick, to that complexion must she come at last." And say to all who think so much of comeliness and goodliness,—That deadly

brown which worms and earth shall bring upon you, that is the natural complexion of man, and to that the fairest must be bronzed at last. But there is another way of minding your complexion, by seeing that your cheek never need be reddened with shame, and that your hands are never black with evil deeds, and that your flesh is not soiled by lasciviousness, or contact with that which is evil. "Will ye take the members of Christ and make them members of an harlot?" saith the apostle Paul, when he biddeth men see to it that their bodies be chaste and pure. Know ye not that your very flesh, if ye be Christians, has been bought with Christ's blood, and that precious is your very dust in his sight. Mind ye, O mind ye, that the slime of the serpent come not here, and that ye defile not the members of your body, lest the Lord abhor you, and cast you out from his presence, as things he careth not for, being none of his.

Let us look at things in this light, and so by the Holy Spirit escape from sin. What! shall these eyes that are one day to "See the king in his beauty," be delighted with vanity? Shall these lips that are to be tuned to melodious sonnets "sung by flaming tongues above," talk that which is light and frivolous, and ministreth not unto edification? What! shall these fingers that are to strike the golden harps be given up to work unrighteousness with greediness? Nay, as we are to be fellows with the angels, and more glorious than they, and as these bodies are to be made like unto Christ's body, let us keep them pure, washed with clean water by his Spirit, renewed and preserved, that we go not astray unto sin.

But, secondly, another thought arises here. *Are we among those for whom Christ thus stood as firstfruits?* For Christ is to rise first, as the firstfruits, "afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming." Then when do the wicked rise? There are two resurrections; and "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." When the Lord shall come from heaven, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, then the dead in Christ shall suddenly start from their sleep, and shall be offered to God as the great harvest, the great Pentecost, of which Christ's resurrection was the firstfruits. What then shall become of the wicked? They shall continue rotting in their graves; the worm shall feed upon them; they shall be ashes beneath the feet of the saints; and while the righteous tread this earth, and on the scene of their conflict enjoy a thousand years of triumph; while Christ's feet shall stand in the latter day upon Mount Olivet; while his people shall bow around him, and shall reign with him triumphant over the creature that was once subject to vanity, beneath their feet shall be the dead bodies of their ungodly persecutors, and deep down in their graves shall rot those infamous kings and princes, and those careless crowds and nations who knew not Jehovah, and would not be obedient unto his Son. They said, "Let us break his bands asunder; let us cast his cords from us." And now where are they? "Death hath dominion over them in the morning, and the righteous triumph over them, while they lie ignominiously like those who fall in battle, a portion for foxes." But what then? When the splendours of the millennial age are over, then cometh the end. The king shall ascend the judgment-

seat; he who came to reign with his people, shall suddenly, sitting upon his throne, bid his angel proclaim the last assize. Then unwillingly shall souls tormented in hell come back from Tophet to be re-united with their equally guilty bodies, and he who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, shall say, "Gather them together in bundles to burn them." He shall pronounce their sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! that you and I may be among the harvest, and not the vintage. There are two ingatherings mentioned, you remember, in the Revelation. The harvest is the gathering in of the righteous; they are carefully housed in God's barn. The vintage is the gathering of the wicked; they are cast into the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God, "and they are trodden under foot till their blood runs forth up to the horses' bridles." Now, how am I to know whether I belong to that portion of which Christ is the firstfruits? Why, thus: If Christ rose for me, and if I rose in him, then I died in him. Oh! soul, dost thou believe that Christ died for thee? Hast thou a part in his passion? Dost thou hope in his agonies? Dost thou rest on his cross? If so, he that died for thee rose for thee too, and thou art a part of that holy lump of which Christ was the holy offering. Hast thou died with Christ thyself? Art thou dead to the world? Dost thou hate the things that thou didst once love? Art thou weaned from thine old pleasures? Dost thou seek for something higher and better? Ah! then, if thou hast died with him, thou art risen with him. Say now, dost thou desire to be one with Christ? For if thou art one with him in heart, thou shalt be one with him in all his trophies and his glories. Dost thou say, "Nay, I care not for Christ?" Soul! Soul! If thou diest in that mind thou shalt have no part in the first resurrection; but when the wicked rise, then shalt thou "Awaken to shame and everlasting contempt." But, and if thou sayest in thy heart this morning, "I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, and I put my sole and only trust in him; he is to me all my salvation, and all my desire," go thy way; thou shalt "stand in thy lot at the end of the days;" thou shalt have thy portion among them that are sanctified; thou shalt rejoice together with him, and sit down at his marriage banquet for ever.

God add his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 30TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly."—Romans v. 6.

THERE is a doctor of divinity here to-night who listened to me some years ago. He has been back to his own dwelling-place in America, and he has come here again. I could not help fancying, as I saw his face just now, that he would think I was doting on the old subject, and harping on the old strain; that I had not advanced a single inch upon any new domain of thought, but was preaching the same old gospel in the same old terms as ever. If he should think so he will be quite right. I suppose I am something like Mr. Cecil when he was a boy. His father once told him to wait in a gateway till he came back, and the father, being very busy, went about the city; and amidst his numerous cares and engagements, he forgot the boy. Night came on, and at last when the father reached home, there was great enquiry as to where Richard was. The father said, "Dear me, I left him early in the morning standing under such-and-such a gateway, and I told him to stay there until I came for him; I should not wonder but what he is there now." So they went, and there they found him. Such an example of childish simple faithfulness it is no disgrace to emulate. I received some years ago orders from my Master to stand at the foot of the cross until he came. He has not come yet, but I mean to stand there till he does. If I should disobey his orders and leave those simple truths which have been the means of the conversion of souls, I know not how I could expect his blessing. Here, then, I stand at the foot of the cross and tell out the old, old story, stale though it sound to itching ears, and worn threadbare as critics may deem it. It is of Christ I love to speak—of Christ who loved, and lived, and died, the substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

It is somewhat singular, but just as they say fish go bad at the head first, so modern divines generally go bad first upon the head and main

doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ. Nearly all our modern errors, I might say all of them, begin with mistakes about Christ. Men do not like to be always preaching the same thing. There are Athenians in the pulpit as well as in the pew who spend their time in nothing but hearing some new thing. They are not content to tell over and over again the simple message, "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." So they borrow novelties from literature, and garnish the Word of God with the words which man's wisdom teacheth. The doctrine of atonement they mystify. Reconciliation by the precious blood of Jesus ceases to be the corner-stone of their ministry. To shape the gospel to the diseased wishes and tastes of men enters far more deeply into their purpose, than to re-mould the mind and renew the heart of men that they receive the gospel as it is. There is no telling where they will go who once go back from following the Lord with a true and undivided heart, from deep to deep descending, the blackness of darkness will receive them unless grace prevent. Only this you may take for a certainty,

"They cannot be right in the rest,
Unless they speak rightly of Him."

If they are not sound about the purpose of the cross, they are rotten everywhere. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this rock there is security. We may be mistaken on any other points with more impunity than this. They who are builded on the rock, though they build wood, and hay, and stubble, thereupon to their sore confusion, for what they build shall be burned, themselves shall be saved yet so as by fire. Now that grand doctrine which we take to be the keystone of the evangelical system, the very corner-stone of the gospel, that grand doctrine of the atonement of Christ we would tell to you again, and then, without attempting to prove it, for that we have done hundreds of times, we shall try to draw some lessons of instruction from that truth which is surely believed among us. Man having sinned, God's righteousness demanded that the penalty should be fulfilled. He had said, "The soul that sinneth shall die;" and unless God can be false, the sinner must die. Moreover, God's holiness demanded it, for the penalty was based on justice. It was just that the sinner should die. God had not appended a more heavy penalty than he should have done. Punishment is the just result of offending. God, then, must either cease to be holy, or the sinner must be punished. Truth and holiness imperiously demanded that God should lift his hand and smite the man who had broken his law and offended his majesty. Christ Jesus, the second Adam, the federal head of the chosen ones, interposed.

He offered himself to bear the penalty which they ought to bear; to fulfil and honour the law which they had broken and dishonoured. He offered to be their day's-man, a surety, a substitute, standing in their room, place, and stead. Christ became the vicar of his people; vicariously suffering in their stead; vicariously doing in their stead that which they were not strong enough to do by reason of the weakness of the flesh through the fall. This which Christ proposed to do was accepted of God. In due time Christ actually died, and fulfilled what he promised to do. He took every sin of all his people, and suffered every stroke of the rod on account of those sins. He had compounded into one awful draught the punishment of the sins of all the elect. He took the cup; he put it to his lips; he sweat as it were great drops of blood while he tasted the first sip thereof, but he never desisted, but drank on, on, on, till he had exhausted the very dregs, and turning the vessel upside down he said, "It is finished!" and at one tremendous draught of love the Lord God of salvation had drained destruction dry. Not a dreg, not the slightest residue was left; he had suffered all that ought to have been suffered; had finished transgression, and made an end of sin. Moreover, he obeyed his Father's law to the utmost extent of it; he fulfilled that will of which he had said of old—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God: thy law is my delight;" and having offered both an atonement for sin and a complete fulfiment of the law, he ascended up on high, took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool, and interceding for those whom he bought with blood that they may be with him where he is. The doctrine of the atonement is very simple. It just consists in the substitution of Christ in the place of the sinner; Christ being treated as if he were the sinner, and then the transgressor being treated as if he were the righteous one. It is a change of persons; Christ becomes the sinner; he stands in the sinner's place and stead; he was numbered with the transgressors; the sinner becomes righteous; he stands in Christ's place and stead, and is numbered with the righteous ones. Christ has no sin of his own, but he takes human guilt, and is punished for human folly. We have no righteousness of our own, but we take the divine righteousness; we are rewarded for it, and stand accepted before God as though that righteousness had been wrought out by ourselves. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," that he might take away their sins.

It is not my present object to prove this doctrine. As I said before, there is no need to be always arguing what we know to be true. Rather

let us say a few earnest words by way of *commending this doctrine of the atonement;* and afterwards I shall propound it *by way of application to those who as yet have not received Christ.*

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDATION.

There are some things to be said for the gospel which proclaims the atonement as its fundamental principle. And the first thing to be said of it is, that in comparison with all modern schemes *how simple it is!* Brethren, this is why our great gentlemen do not like it, it is too plain. If you will go and purchase certain books which teach you how sermons ought to be made, you will find that the English of it is this,—pick all the hard words you can out of all the books you read in the week, and then pour them out on your people on Sunday; and there is a certain set of people who always applaud the man they cannot understand. They are like the old woman who was asked when she came home from Church, "Did you understand the sermon?" "No;" she answered, "I would not have the presumption;" she thought it would be presumption to attempt to understand the minister. But the Word of God is understood with the heart, and makes no strange demands on the intellect.

Now, our first commendation on the doctrine of the atonement is, that it commends itself *to the understanding.* The way-faring man, though his intellect be but one grade beyond an idiot, may get a hold on the truth of substitution without any difficulty. Oh, these modern theologians, they will do anything to spirit away the cross! They hang over it the gaudy trappings of their elocution, or they introduce it with the dark mysterious incantations of their logic, and then the poor troubled heart looks up to see the cross and sees nothing there but human wisdom. Now I say it again, there is not one of you here but can understand this truth, that Christ died in the stead of his people. If you perish, it will not be because the gospel was beyond your comprehension. If you go down to hell, it will not be because you were not able to understand how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It is astonishing in this age how little is known of the simple truisms of the Bible; it seems to be always admonishing us how simple we ought to be in setting them forth. I have heard that when Mr. Kilpin was once preaching a very good and earnest sermon, he used the word "Deity," and a sailor sitting down below leaned forward and said, "Beg your pardon, sir, but who's he, pray? Do you mean God Almighty?" "Yes," said Mr. Kilpin, "I do mean God, and I ought not to have used a word which you could not understand." "I thank you, sir," said the sailor, and looked as if he would devour the rest of the sermon in the

interest which he felt in it even to the close. Now that one unvarnished fact is but an index of that which prevails in every land. There must be simple preaching. A doctrine of atonement that is not simple, a doctrine which comes from Germany, which needs a man to be a great scholar before he can comprehend it himself, and to be a still greater adept before he can tell it to others—such a doctrine is manifestly not of God, because it is not suited to God's creatures. It is fascinating to one in a thousand of them, but it is not suited to those poor of this world who are rich in faith; not suited to those babes to whom God has revealed the things of the kingdom while he has hidden them from the wise and prudent. Oh, you may always judge of a doctrine in this way. If it is not a simple doctrine, it does not come from God; if it puzzles you, if it is one which you cannot see through at once because of the mysterious language in which it is couched, you may begin to suspect that it is man's doctrine, and not the Word of God.

Nor is this doctrine of the atonement to be commended merely for its simplicity, but because while suiting the understanding it also *suits the conscience*. How it satisfies the conscience no tongue can tell! When a man is awakened and his conscience stings him, when the Spirit of God has shown him his sin and his guilt, there is nothing but the blood of Christ that can ever give him peace. Peter might have stood up at the prow of the boat and have said to the winds and to the waves, "Peace, be still," but they would have gone on roaring with unabated fury. The Pope of Rome, who pretends to be Peter's successor, may stand up with his ceremonies and say to the troubled conscience, "Peace, be still," but it will not cease it's terrible agitations. The unclean spirit that sets conscience in so much turmoil cries out, "Jesus I know, and his cross I know, but who are ye?" Yea, and it will not be cast out. There is no chance whatever of our finding a pillow for a head which the Holy Ghost has made to ache save in the atonement and the finished work of Christ. When Mr. Robert Hall first went to Cambridge to preach, the Cambridge folks were nearly Unitarians. So he preached upon the doctrine of the finished work of Christ, and some of them came to him in the vestry and said, "Mr. Hall, this will never do." "Why not?" said he, "Why, your sermon was only fit for old women." "And why only fit for old women?" said Mr. Hall. "Because," said they, "they are tottering on the borders of the grave, and they want comfort, and, therefore, it will suit them, but it will not do for us." "Very well," said Mr. Hall, "you have unconsciously paid me all the compliment that I can ask for; if this is good for old women on the borders of the grave, it

must be good for you if you are in your right senses, for the borders of the grave is where we all stand." Here, indeed, is a choice feature of the atonement, it is comforting to us in the thought of death. When conscience is awakened to a sense of guilt, death is sure to cast his pale shadow on all our prospects, and encircle all our steps with dark omens of the grave. Conscience is accompanied generally in its alarms with the thoughts of the near-approaching judgment, but the peace which the blood gives is conscience-proof, sickness-proof, death-proof, devil-proof, judgment-proof, and it will be eternity-proof. We may well be alarmed at all the uprisings of occupation and all the remembrance of past defilement, but only let our eyes rest on thy dear cross, O Jesus, and our conscience has peace with God, and we rest and are still. Now we ask whether any of these modern systems of divinity can quiet a troubled conscience? We would like to give them some cases that we meet with sometimes—some despairing ones—and say, "Now, here, cast this devil out if you can; try your hand at it," and I think they would find, that this kind goeth not out save by the tears, and groans, and death of Jesus Christ the atoning sacrifice. A gospel without an atonement may do very well for young ladies and gentlemen who do not know that they ever did anything wrong. It will just suit your lackadaisical people who have not got a heart for anybody to see; who have always been quite moral, upright, and respectable; who would feel insulted if you told them they deserved to be sent to hell; who would not for a moment allow that they could be depraved or fallen creatures. The gospel, I say, of these moderns will suit these gentlefolks very well I dare say, but let a man be really guilty and know it; let him be really awake to his lost state, and I aver that none but Jesus—none but Jesus, nothing but the precious blood can give him peace and rest. For these two things, then, commend us to the doctrine of the atonement, because it suits the understanding of the most lowly, and will quiet the conscience of the most troubled.

It has, moreover, this peculiar excellency, that *it softens the heart.* There is a mysterious softening and melting power in the story of the sacrifice of Christ. I know a dear Christian woman who loved her little ones and sought their salvation. When she prayed for them, she thought it right to use the best means she could to arrest their attention and awaken their minds. I hope you all do likewise. The means, however, which she thought best calculated for her object was the terrors of the Lord. She used to read to her children chapter after chapter of *Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted.* Oh, that book! how many dreams it gave her boy at night about the devouring flames and the everlasting burnings. But the boy's heart grew hardened, as if it were annealed rather

than melted by the furnace of fear. The hammer welded the heart to sin, but did not break it. But even then, when the lad's heart was hard, when he heard of Jesu's love to his people, though he feared he was not one of them, still it used to make him weep to think Jesus should love anybody after such a sort. Even now that he has come to manhood, law and terrors make him dead and stolid, but thy blood, Jesu, thine agonies in Gethsemane and on the tree, he cannot bear; they melt him; his soul flows through his eyes in tears; he weeps himself away from grateful love to thee for what thou hast done. Alas for those that deny the atonement! They take the very sting out of Christ's sufferings; and then, in taking out the sting, they take out the point with which the sufferings of Christ pierce, and probe, and penetrate the heart. It is because Christ suffered for my sin, because he was condemned that I might be acquitted and not be damned as the result of my guilt: it is this that makes his sufferings such a cordial to my heart.

"See on the bloody tree,
The illustrious sufferer hangs,
The torments due to thee,
He bore the dreadful pangs;
And cancelled there, the mighty sum,
Sins present, past, and sins to come."

At this present hour there are congregations met in the theatres of London, and there are persons addressing them. I do not know what their subjects are, but I know what they ought to be. If they want to get at the intellects of those who live in the back-slums, if they want to get at the consciences of those who have been thieves and drunkards, if they want to melt the hearts of those who have grown stubborn and callous through years of lust and iniquity, I know there is nothing will do it but the death on Calvary, the five wounds, the bleeding side, the vinegar, the nails, and the spear. There is a melting power here which is not to be found in all the world besides.

I will detain you yet once more on this point. We commend the doctrine of the atonement because, besides suiting the understanding, quieting the conscience, and melting the heart, we know there is a power in it to *affect the outward life*. No man can believe that Christ suffered for his sins and yet live in sin. No man can believe that his iniquities were the murderers of Christ, and yet go and hug those murderers to his bosom. The sure and certain effect of a true faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the purging out of the old leaven, the dedication of the soul to him who bought it with his blood, and the vowing to have revenge against those sins which nailed Jesus to the tree. The proof, after all, is in the trial. Go into

any parish in England where there lives a philosophical divine who has cut the atonement out of his preaching, and if you do not find more harlots, and thieves, and drunkards there than is usual, write me down mistaken; but go, on the other hand, into a parish where the atonement is preached, and that with rigid integrity and with loving earnestness, and if you do not find the ale-houses getting empty, and the shops shut on the Sunday, and the people walking in honesty and uprightness, then I have looked about the world in vain. I knew a village once that was perhaps one of the worst villages in England for many things; where many an illicit still was yielding its noxious liquor to a manufacturer without payment of the duty to the Government, and where, in connection with that, all manner of riot and iniquity were rife. There went a lad into that village, and but a lad, and one who had no scholarship, but was rough, and sometimes vulgar. He began to preach there, and it pleased God to turn that village upside down, and in a short time the little thatched chapel was crammed, and the biggest vagabonds of the village were weeping floods of tears, and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessing; and where there had been robberies and villainies of every kind all round the neighbourhood, there were none, because the men who did the mischief were themselves in the house of God, rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified. Mark me, I am not telling you an exaggerated story now, nor a thing that I do not know. Yet this one thing I remember to the praise of God's grace, it pleased the Lord to work signs and wonders in our midst. He showed the power of Jesu's name, and made us witnesses of that gospel which can win souls, draw reluctant hearts, and mould the life and conduct of men afresh. Why, there are some brethren here who go to the refuges and homes to talk to those poor fallen girls who have been reclaimed. I wonder what they would do if they had not the gospel tale to carry with them to the abodes of wretchedness and shame. If they should take a leaf out of some divinity essays, and should go and talk to them in high-flowing words, and philosophies, what good would it be to them? Well, what is not good to them is not good to us. We want something we can grasp, something we can rely upon, something we can feel; something that will mould our character and conversation, and make us to be like Christ.

II. Secondly, one or two points BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Christian man, you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them. What shall we say to you? To you first we say, what a joyful Christian *you ought to be!* How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, what matter what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if thou hast but forgiven

me, smite as hard as thou wilt;" as if he felt like a child who had done wrong, and cared not how his father might whip him if he would but forgive him. So *I* think you can say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, slander, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad, and my spirit is rejoiced."

And then, Christian, if thou art thus saved, and Christ really did take thy sin, whilst thou art glad, *be grateful and be loving.* Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou him who served thee. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal bubble over with some little ebullition of song. You may say,

"I love my God with zeal so great, that I could give him all,"

but sing it not in words unless thou dost mean it. Oh, do mean it! Is there nothing in your life that you do because you belong to Christ? Are you never anxious to show your love in some expressive tokens? Love the brethren of him who loved thee. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake. If there be a poor tried believer, try and weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of him who wept for thee and carried thy sins.

And yet, again, Christian, if this be true that there is an atonement made for sin, *tell it, tell it, tell it.* "We cannot all preach," say you; no, but tell it, tell it. "I could not prepare a sermon;" tell it; tell out the story; tell out the mystry and wonder of Christ's love. "But I should never get a congregation;" tell it in your house; tell it by the fire-side. "But I have none but little children;" tell it to your children, and let them know the sweet mystery of the cross, and the blessed history of him who lived and died for sinners. Tell it, for you know not into what ears you may speak. Tell it often, for thus you will have the better hope that you may turn sinners to Christ. Lacking talent, lacking the graces of oratory, be glad that you lack these, and glory in your infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon you, but do tell it. Sometimes there are some of our young men get preaching who had better hold their tongues, but there are many others who have gifts and abilities which they might use for Christ, but who seem tongue-tied. I have often said that if you get a young man to join a rifle corps, he has got something to do, and he puts his heart in it; but if you get the same young man to join a church, well, his name is in the book, and he has been baptized, and so on, and he thinks he has nothing more to do with it. Why, brethren, I do not like to have members of the church who feel they can throw the responsibility on a few of us while they themselves sit still. That is not the way to win battles. If at Waterloo some nine out of ten of our soldiers had said, "Well,

we need not fight; we will leave the fighting to the few, there they are; let them go and do it all." Why, if they had said that, they would very soon have all been cut in pieces. They must every one of them take their turns, horse, and foot, and artillery; men who were light-armed, and men of all kinds; they must each march to the fray; yes, and even the guards, if they are held back as a reserve to the last, yet they must be called for,—"Up guards, and at 'em;" and if there are any of you here that are old men and women and think you are like the guards, and ought to be spared the heavy conflict, yet up and at them, for now the world needs you all, and since Christ has bought you with his blood, I beseech you be not content till you have fought for him, and have been victorious through his name. Tell it; tell it; tell it; with voice of thunder tell it; yea, with many voices mingling together as the sound of many waters; tell it till the dwellers in the remotest wilderness shall hear the sound thereof. Tell it till there shall be ne'er a cot upon the mountain where it is not known, ne'er a ship upon the sea where the story has not been told. Tell it till there is never a dark alley that has not been illuminated by its light, nor a loathsome den which has not been cleansed by its power. Tell out the story that Christ died for the ungodly.

With a few words of application to unbelievers I draw to a close. Unbeliever, if God cannot and will not forgive the sins of penitent men without Christ taking their punishment, rest assured he will surely bring you to judgment. If, when Christ, God's Son, had imputed sin laid on him, God smote him, how will he smite you who are his enemy, and who have your own sins upon your head? God seemed at Calvary, as it were, to take an oath—sinner, hear it!—he seemed, as it were, to take an oath and say, "By the blood of my Son I swear that sin must be punished," and if it is not punished in Christ for you, it will be punished in you for yourselves. Is Christ yours, sinner? Did he die for you? Do you trust him? If you do, he died for you. Do you say, "No, I do not?" Then remember that if you live and die without faith in Christ, for every idle word and for every ill act that you have done, stroke for stroke, and blow for blow, vengeance must chastise you.

Again, to another class of you, this word. If God has in Christ made an atonement and opened a way of salvation, what must be your guilt who try to open another way; who say, "I will be good and virtuous; I will attend to ceremonies; I will save myself?" Fool that thou art, thou hast insulted God in his tenderest point, for thou hast insulted his Son. Thou hast said, "*I* can do it without that blood;" thou hast, in fact, trampled on the blood of Christ, and said, "I need it not." Oh, if the sinner who repents not be damned, with what accumulated

terrors shall he be damned, who, in addition to his impenitence, heaps affronts upon the person of Christ by going about to establish his own righteousness. Leave it; leave your rags, you will never make a garment of them; leave that pilfered treasure of thine; it is a counterfeit; forsake it. I counsel thee to buy of Christ fine raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and fine gold that thou mayest be rich.

And consider this, one and all of you, oh my hearers! If Christ hath made atonement for the ungodly, then let the question go round, let it go round the aisles and round the gallery, and let it echo in every heart, and let it be repeated by every lip,—"Why not for me?" and "Why not for me?" Hope, sinner, hope; he died for the ungodly. If it had said he died for the godly, there were no hope for thee. If it had been written that he died to save the good, the excellent, and the perfect, then thou hast no chance. He died for the ungodly; thou art such an one; what reason hast thou to conclude that he did not die for thee? Hark thee, man; this is what Christ saith to thee, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" that is, trust, and thou shalt be saved. Trust thy soul in the hands of him who carried thy load upon the cross; trust him now. He died for you; your faith is to us the evidence, and to you the proof that Christ bought you with his blood. Delay not; you need not even stay to go home to offer a prayer. Trust Christ with your soul now. You have nothing else to trust to; hang on him. You are going down; you are going down. The waves are gathering about you, and soon shall they swallow you up, and we shall hear your gurglings as you sink. See, he stretches out his hand. "Sinner," saith he, "I will bear thee up; though hell's fiery waves should dash against thee I will bear thee through them all, only trust me." What sayest thou, sinner? Wilt thou trust him? Oh, my soul, recollect the moment when first I trusted in him! There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, but I hardly think that is greater joy than the joy of the repenting sinner when he first finds Christ. So simple and so easy it seemed to me when I came to know it. I had only to look and live, only to trust and be saved. Year after year had I been running about hither and thither to try and do what was done beforehand, to try and get ready for that which did not want any readiness. Oh, happy was that day when I ventured to step in by the open door of his mercy, to sit at the table of grace ready spread, and to eat and drink, asking no questions! Oh, soul, do the same! Take courage. Trust Christ, and if he cast thee away when thou hast trusted him—my soul for thine as we meet at the bar of God, I will be pawn and pledge for thee at the last great day if such thou needest; but he cannot and he will not cast out any that come to him by faith. May God now accept and bless us all, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S ESTIMATE OF TIME.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 27TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."—2 Peter iii. 8.

FROM this text certain persons, more desirous to find arguments for their theories, than a truthful exposition of the apostle's meaning, have drawn the inference that a day in Scripture is typical of a thousand years: that is to say, that inasmuch as God was six days in creating the heavens and the earth, and then rested on the seventh day, so we must expect to have a thousand years for every day; a thousand years in which the new heavens and the new earth will be in preparation, and then we shall enjoy in the seventh thousand a period of perfect peace and holiness. Now such may possibly be the case. It may so happen that when the six thousandth year of labour shall be over, we shall enter upon the millenial rest; the last chiliad may be a Sabbath to the preceding six. But even if we knew this, I am not sure that it would be of any great assistance to us in foretelling the day when the Church militant should be universally triumphant through the coming of her Lord, for the chronology of the past is surrounded with so much obscurity that we question whether any man will be able to tell us when the six thousand years will be over, or within a hundred or two of how old the world is. Our curiosity would be rather tantalized than gratified, even if this theory could be verified; for all the chronologies we have, even that which the translators have put into our Bibles, are matters of conjecture; and their accuracy is far from indisputable. We could not, therefore, ascertain the times and seasons any the more certainly, nor ought we to desire to do so, for the Father keepeth them in his own power, and as for the time of the end we believe no man knoweth it, no, not the angels of God. Brethren, we would not wish to discover what God has hidden, nor to question where he declines to answer. It is certain, however, that our text does not teach the doctrine of the Sabbatic seventh thousand years; for looking at the whole drift of the passage, you will see that the words were written to meet the arguments of some who said, "Where is the promise of his coming; for

since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "No," answers the apostle, "It is not so;" and then he quotes the memorable case of the flood as an instance of Divine interposition. Knowing, moreover, that even the faithful had begun to chide the tardy hours, and think the promise long in fulfilment, he meets the adversary and consoles the friend by the words of our text. He as much as says, "You know not what you say when you speak of length of time, for you forget that in God's estimate one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The apostle, no doubt, wrote this also for the encouragement of Christians in our day, who, because the chariot of Christ is long in coming to the triumph, are growing weary, and are ready to cast down their arms and leave the conflict. Like a good officer rallying the dispirited, he exhorts them to patience; "Beloved, it is not long; it may seem a tedious age to you; but it is fitting that you tarry for a while. Cease your impatience, and while you cry, 'Why are are his chariots so long in coming?' remember that the time is not long to him; to him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day." What the apostle seemed to teach was, the general principle that our estimate of time is not the right one, certainly not the Divine standard; and that when we look at time in relation to God, we must remember that the distinctions which are known to us are not observed by him.

Before, however, I enter upon the subject itself, let me remark that the apostle says he would not have us ignorant concerning this matter; and therefore, beyond a doubt, great importance is to be attached to it. Some have a wilful ignorance, and of them the apostle speaks in the preceding verse: "This they willingly are ignorant of." See to it, brethren, that ye do not commit this sin of shutting your eyes to the light. Others have an idle ignorance; they will not study; they do not search the Scriptures; and, therefore, many things are not revealed to them. That the soul should be without knowledge is not good; and more especially, that the Christian's mind should be without knowledge of God must be exceedingly harmful. We cannot form an idea of what God is, but we should be very careful that we do not make him to be what he is not. Our apostle is the more earnest that upon this point of God's eternity we should make no mistakes, and should not estimate and measure the existence of the Infinite One by our rules and standards, because, practically, the worst effects may flow from an error here; impatience may ripen into unbelief; this may rot into petulant complaint, and that may breed inaction, sloth, disobedience, rebellion, and we know not how many other evils.

But now, to the text at once, and we will handle it, as God shall help us, in three ways. First, we shall say a little as to *the general principle of the text;* secondly, taking the words of the passage, we shall dwell upon *God's estimate of a day;* and then, in the third place, still keeping to the words of the sentence, we shall enlarge upon *God's estimate of a thousand years.*

I. First of all, then, we shall take the statement before us AS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

1. In opening up this general principle, we remark that *all time is equally present with God.* When we know that an event is to transpire to-day, it appears very near to us; but when we know that it will not occur until a thousand years have elapsed, we think nothing of it; we feel that we shall have gone to our graves long before that era, and therefore, the event does not strike us as having any connection with ourselves. Now, it is not so with God. All things are equally near and present to his view; the distance of a thousand years before the occurrence of an event, is no more to him than would be the interval of a day. With God, indeed, there is neither past, present, nor future. He takes for his name the "I AM." He does not call himself the "I WAS," for then we should conceive that he used to be something which he is not now; that some part of his character had changed, or some attribute ceased from existence; for there is an ominous sound of annihilation in the sound of the word, "He WAS." Is it not rather a knell for the dead, than a name for the living? Nor does our Lord God speak of himself as the "I SHALL BE," for that might lead us to imagine that he is not now something which he is to be in the ages to come: whereas, we know that his being is perfect, his essence infinite, his dominion absolute, his power unlimited, and his glory transcendant. Development is out of the question, he is all to-day that he will be in future. Of the Lord Jesus we read that he is the Everlasting Father, and yet he has the dew of his youth. Childhood, manhood and old age belong to creatures, but at the right hand of the Most High they have no abode. Growth, progress, advancement, all these are virtues in finite beings, but to the Infinite the thought of such change would be an insult. Yesterday, to day, and to-morrow, belong to dying mortal, the Immortal King lives in an eternal *to-day.* He is the I AM; I AM in the present; I AM in the past; and I AM in the future. Just as we say of God that he is everywhere, so we may say of him that he is always; he is everywhere in space; he is everywhere in time. God is to-day in the past; he is to-day already in the future; he is to-day in that present in which we are.

This is a subject upon which we can only speak without ourselves fully understanding what we say, but yet, perhaps, a metaphor may tend to make the matter a little simpler. There is a river flowing along in gentle slope toward the sea. A boatman is upon it; his vessel is here; anon it is there; and soon it will be at the river's mouth; only that part of the river upon which he is sailing is present to him. But up yonder, on a lofty mountain, stands a traveller; as he looks from the summit he marks the source of the river and gazes upon its infant stream, where as yet it is but a narrow line of silver; then he follows it with his clear eye until it swells into a rolling flood, and he tracks it till it is finally absorbed into the ocean. Now, as the climber stands upon that Alp, that whole sparkling line of water adorning the plain is equally present to him from its source to its fall; there is not one part of the stream which is nearer to him than another; in the long distance he sees the whole of it, from the end to the beginning. The boatman yonder has shifted his place since we have been looking upon him from the top of the mountain; he cannot see the whole of the river; he can only speak of the river under the heads of where he was, where he is,

and where he is to be; but we who see it as a whole speak of it as a whole, and it is all present before our view. Such, we think, is the stream of time to God. From the altitude of his observance he looketh down upon it and seeth it at one gaze; taking in, not at many thoughts, but at one thought, all the revolutions of time and all the changes of ages, and seeing both the thousands of years that have gone, and the thousands that are yet to come, as present at one view before his eye. Or, to use another figure: there are some stars which are known as double-stars, and with the strongest telescope it seems impossible to discover any distance between them; they are all but joined; there are certain motions by which the astronomer perceives they are two stars and not one, but to the common observer they seem one. Even with the strongest telescope, we say, no distance is apparent between them; and yet it is perfectly certain that there may be millions and millions of miles of space between those two stars, but from the distance at which we stand they resolve themselves into one. So it is with the events of time. Such, for instance, as the fall and the redemption; there is to us a space of some thousands of years; but God, who is far-seeing, from his lofty throne looketh down upon them and they resolve themselves into one. He sees the fall as taking place in the morning of time, and the redemption as completed ere even-tide has come. To him they are one thought. We look at the fall and weep over it, and then afterwards we view the restoration in Christ and rejoice; but God regards the whole as one—the fall and the rising again of Israel are one. He linketh them so closely together that he clearly beholds the glory which by the whole occurrence is brought to him, and the common good which is given to the creatures that his hands have made. I know that by figures, however simple we may make them, we cannot set forth God to human eyes, for the face of none of his attributes can be seen; yet it seems to me that we may by these thoughts be led to remember that a thousand years in the future are to God but as one day, and so too with the past, since he looketh upon all things in one eternal NOW, as they stand perpetually present before his eye.

Let the sinner recollect this. His sins, he says, were committed ten or twenty years ago; to God they are present in unmitigated hue of scarlet at this moment. Let the sinner recollect this when he thinks of death and of the penalty after death. "Ah," he says, "it is a long time to come." Not so, sinner; to God it is but as a day, and if thou couldst estimate it aright, how near the judgment is to thee, and how close are those consuming flames into which impenitent souls must be cast! Think of this, I pray thee, O dying man, tremble, and God help thee to look upon thy years as one day, and oh! remember, that one day in hell will be more painful than a thousand years on earth. God keep thee from that place, for his name's sake!

2. Still, taking the text as a general principle, it teaches us in the next place, *that all time is equally powerless with God to affect him.* A day does not make any particular change in us that we can notice. We do not meet our friend at night, after having seen him the previous morning, and say, "My dear Sir, how much older you look!" There is no doubt we all do grow older in one day, but the change is not very perceptible,

at least by such coarse, common optics as those which mortal men possess. But if you take fifty years—what a difference is perceptible in any of us! Some of my dear friends round about me, who are now grey or bald, were, fifty years ago, fine, tall, handsome young men, in the full strength and vigour of their days; and others of us, twenty years ago were prattling boys, fond of play and frolic, and now we have come to manhood, and are bearing the burden and heat of the day. The fingers of time blot the epistle of life very sadly. As to this present congregation, wait but a hundred years and where shall we all be? Unless the Lord come we shall every one of us be slumbering in the dust, awaiting the trump of the archangel. But as a day seems to make no change with us, so, but far more truthfully, a thousand years make no change with God. Ages roll on, but he abideth the same as when the waves break themselves against the rock, but the rock standeth fast for ever. Brethren, we need be under no apprehension that God will ever be affected with *weakness* through the revolutions of time. The Ancient of Days, ever omnipotent, fainteth not, neither is weary. Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Is his ear heavy that he cannot hear? Is his arm shortened that he cannot save? We shall find, if this creaking earth is to perform revolutions upon its axle for another thousand years longer, that the Lord will shew himself as strong to help his servants, and as mighty to crush his foes as aforetime. And as time brings no weakness, certainly it shall bring no *decay* to God. Upon his brow there is ne'er a furrow; no signs of palsy are in his hand. In the vision his head and hair, we are told, are white like wool, as white as snow, as the emblem of his eternity, as the Ancient of Days; but "his locks are bushy and black as the raven," said another, as the emblem of his perpetual youth and of his eternal strength. O Sun, thy fires shall one day become extinct! O Moon, thou shalt hide thy light! and you, ye Stars, when ye are ripe shall fall like fig-leaves from the tree! and as for thee, O Earth, thine ancient mountains already crumble to decay, and thou thyself and all that dwelleth on thee shalt pass away as a garment that is worn out! but as for thee, O God, thou art the same, and of thy years there is no end; from everlasting to everlasting thou art God! And as no weakness and no decay can be brought to God by time, so *no change in his purpose* can ever come through revolving years. To that which he hath set his seal he standeth fast, and what his heart decrees, that will he do. He knoweth no repentance; he is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent.

Moreover, as there can be no change in his decree, so *no unforeseen difficulties can intervene to prevent the accomplishment of it.* Hath he not said, and will he not do it? Hath he not commanded, and shall it not come to pass? There shall be no unforeseen and unprovided energy required; no unexpected impediments shall block up his path. Up till to-day he has levelled the mountains and bridged the seas; up till now his own right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory; up till now no weapon formed against him has prospered, and every tongue that has risen against him in judgment he has condemned; and so shall it be world without end. As long as there is a work to do, he

shall do it; as long as there is an enemy to conquer, that enemy shall be overcome. Conquering and to conquer is thy course, O Lord, and throughout all ages thou art the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. One day, in the matter of change, is to God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

3. Yet further; no doubt the text intends to teach *that all time is insignificant to God.* Within the compass of a drop of water we are told that sometimes a thousand living creatures may be discovered, and to those little creatures no doubt their size is something very important. There is a creature inside that drop which can only be seen by the strongest microscope, but it is a hundred times larger than its neighbour, and it feels, no doubt, that the difference is amazing and extraordinary. But to you and to me, who cannot even see the largest creature with the naked eye, the gigantic animalcule is as imperceptible as his dwarfish friend, they both seem so utterly insignificant that we squander whole millions of them, and are not very penitent if we destroy them by thousands. But what would one of those little infusorial animals say if some prophet of its own kind could tell it that there is a creature living that could count the whole world of a drop of water as nothing, and could take up ten thousand thousand of those drops and scatter them without exertion of half its power; that this creature would not be encumbered if it should carry on the tip of its finger all the thousands that live in that great world—a drop of water; that this creature would have no disturbance of heart, even if the great king of one of the empires in that drop should gather all his armies against it and lead them to battle? Why, then the little creatures would say, "How can this be; we can hardly grasp the idea?" But when that infusorial philosopher could have gotten an idea of man, and of the utter insignificance of its own self, and of its own little narrow world, then it would have achieved an easy task compared with that which lies before us when we attempt to get an idea of God. The fact is, it is only because he is infinite that he can even observe our existence. We think of the infinite nature of God in being able to marshal all the stars, and govern all the orbs which bespangle the brow of night; but I take it to be quite as great a wonder that he should even know that such insignifiant nothings as we are in existence, much more that he should count every hair of our heads, and not suffer one of them to fall to the ground without his express decree. The Infinite is as much known in the minute as in the magnanimous, and God may be as really discovered by us in the drop of water as in the rolling orb; but this is wonderful of God, that he even observeth us. What think you now, brethren? Do you not think that the thousand years which we make so much fuss about are only comparable to a drop, and that the one day that we think so little of is a particle of that drop, and that both the drop and the particle are alike to God, and are utterly insignificant to him? They are not to be mentioned; they are but cyphers in his great existence; they are but drops in the ocean of his life; they are but one leaf in an eternal forest of existence; they are but one grain of sand on the mighty shore of the perpetual being of the ever-living one. A thousand years are as a day, and a day as a thousand years.

4. I think we ought also to learn from the text *that all time is equally obedient to God.* You and I are the servants of time, but God is its sovereign Master. I cannot make an hour longer than it is—I often wish I could. When there is but an hour's space between some important labour, and more preparation is needed, one would pull an hour at both ends if one could; but it is rigidly an hour, and refuses to be lengthened. There are times when we would make a day, if we could, much shorter; when we are racked with pain, we say in the morning, "Would God it were evening!" We want to bring the two ends of the day together, but unhappily they refuse to start from their fixed position. Time, inexorable Time, goes on, with so many ticks of the clock, and though every motion of the pendulum may be as the cutting of a sword into our vitals, yet Time will not relent, but on he goes—to the miserable he will never be fast, and to the happy he will never be slow; he himself and his footsteps retain incessantly one ordained motion. Not so, however, with God. Time is not his master. If he shall say to the sun, "Stand still, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon," they must stand there eternally, unless he bids them move again; and if, on the other hand, he should bid them speed their course till the dial should go forward many degrees, it must be so. The horses of the sun must hasten their speed; they must fly onward as God himself shall ordain, for he is their charioteer, and the reins are in his hands. To him if the days were longer, or if they were shorter, it would be nothing; he careth not for these. Oh, brethren, we understand him not; but let us adore him; we cannot comprehend him, but let us admire him. I say again, this is wonderful that he is Time's Master, and bids him move slowly or rapidly, and Time is obedient to the behests of the Eternal God. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

II. Only a few words upon the second head.—GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A DAY. He can make a day as useful, and to him it shall be as long as a thousand years.

Brethren, I think this is one of the most brilliant of the Church's hopes. We have been saying, "How many converts have been made by the Missionary Society during fifty or sixty years?" and we have said, "Well, at this rate, how long will it be before the world is converted?" Ah! "At this rate;" but how do you know God's rate? God can do as much in a day as has been done in a thousand years that are past, if so he wills it. To the snail a furlong is a very long distance, but to a stag or a hound how little it is; and then to a steam-engine it is nothing; and then to a ray of light it becomes nothing at all; and then there may be something that travels as much more swiftly than light as light does more swiftly than the snail, and then where would distance be? It is annihilated; it is gone. So is work, and labour, and toil with God. It is for you and I continually to work, work, work, and if our pace be but that of the snail, we must still persevere, hoping to reach the end. But the day may come when God shall make one minister more mighty than a thousand; when one sermon shall be enough to convert a congregation; when that one congregation shall in an instant be endowed with fiery tongues and all the brethren shall go forth and themselves become preachers; and ere one day, one natural day is set,

it may be possible for God to have made the light of the gospel flash from one end of the earth to the other, as quickly as the light of the sun travels from east to west. Limit not the Holy One of Israel.

"When he makes bare his arm,
What shall his work withstand?
When he his people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay his hand?"

When he cometh forth out of his chamber like the sun, what thick darkness shall shade his light? He looseth the bands of Orion, and guideth Arcturus with his sons; shall he not when he chooses loose the bands of his Church, and guide forth those stars of his right hand—the chosen preachers of the gospel of Christ? Only let him will it, and there shall be one day written in the records of the Church that shall be equal in achievements, in conquests, and in triumphs, to any thousand years of her history recorded aforetime. This should lead us to remember that when God speaketh of judging the world at the day of judgment, he will find no difficulty in doing it. Two hundred judges might find it difficult to try in one day all the cases that might be brought before them in a single nation, but God, when he holdeth the great assize, shall be able to convict every guilty one, and to absolve every penitent, and that, too, in one day. The Judgment could not be performed better if it lasted through an age; it shall be none the worse because it is confined to a day. Oh Master, let us see thy great works! Come thou forth, and once again make days illustrious things. When thou broughtest up thy people out of Egypt, when thou didst lead them through the Red sea, thou needest not a thousand years to break the chivalry of Egypt, and to raise a wail from the sons of Mizraim. 'Twas but an uplifted rod; a few hours of divided sea, a terrific union of the parted floods, and lo, Egypt's horses and chariots passed away, and they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Thou needest not a thousand years to break the power of Jabin, king of Hazor,—thou didst but speak, and the mighty river, the river Kishon, swept them away; the stars fought from heaven, the stars fought against Sisera. The might of the heathen was broken, and Israel was free. Thou didst not need a thousand years to drive back Sennacherib. Lo, thou didst put thy bit into his mouth and thy hook into his nose, and in one night the angel of the Lord smote the horse and the rider and they lay dead, and thou leddest him back into confusion into the house of his God, and he fell by the hands of the offspring of his bowels. Glory be unto thee, Jehovah! When thou risest up in the greatness of thy might thou shalt slay kings and overthrow mighty kings; the two-leaved gates of brass shall open and the bars of iron shall be cut in pieces; thou shalt in one day cause the nations of the earth to say, "The Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God alone."

III. But we now turn to notice GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A THOUSAND YEARS. A day is to him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The complaint which is brought by mournful unbelieving Zion is, "He is long in coming; his widowed spouse waiteth for him, but the bridegroom tarrieth." Oh, the long and dreary winter, oh, the dark and dreary winter, when will summer come? When shall the rain

be over and passed, and the voice of the turtle be heard in our land? We have tarried 1860 years and more, and yet no coming of the Son of Man. The dweller in the isle bringeth no tribute, the inhabitant of the wilderness boweth not to lick the dust. Christ reigneth not yet in Jerusalem, nor do his ancients behold his face wearing the crown of his Father David. "How long, how long?" the saints under the altar cry, "How long?" and the saints at the altar here to-day take up the same wailing notes, "How long? how long? how long?" But he answereth. "I am not long. What if I have waited and the time is long to you; yet it is not long to me." God bids you think for a moment, that if you really measure aright, it is no lengthened period of time that he has made the vision to tarry. For see you first, my brethren, the time that has elapsed since Christ's crucifixion is not long *compared with eternity*. Try if you can to measure Eternity. You will find your task impossible. Even should another thousand years roll on, what would some three thousand years be compared with Eternity? You might form a comparison between a shellful of water from the sea in the child's hand and the whole of the sea itself, but it were not possible by human figures to put down the comparison between two or three thousand years and Eternity. Nay, the comparison cannot be made; it is nothing contrasted with all things; it is the unit put in comparison with the infinite. Wherefore, therefore, do you think him long? If in all eternity you are to meditate upon the riches of God in Christ revealed to you in these 6000 years, if through all the eternal cycles this is to be the subject of your meditation, do you wonder that it should have been so long? Marvel you not rather that it should be so short a time?

Then, again, when ye say that God is long in the accomplishment of his great purposes, remember that *he has no need to be in a hurry*. Whatsoever you and I find to do, we must do it with all our might: for there is neither work nor device in the grave whither we are hastening; but God liveth, and liveth for ever. Our sun goes down; if the labourer would get his day's work done, he must toil with the sweat upon his brow; but God's sun never goeth down; he may, like a God, take his own time, and go about his work leisurely; surely he need not run to reach his purpose. When two little kings grow offended with one another, straightway they hasten into war; but when some mighty monarchy becomes provoked, it can take its time, and wait, and marshal all its troops for the affray. Ye might have seen yesterday, the clouds gathering hastily, with the winds pursuing them in fierce rushings. Their black host speedily covered the face of the sky, the rain fell in rattling drops, and poured upon the earth in torrents, there was haste and fury, but we knew from the very haste with which the clouds came together, that they only betokened a hurried storm. But it is when the clouds come slowly up to the great rendezvous—when at last God's trumpet sounds to summon his black warriors to the battle—when ye behold, at length, the sharp flash, the glitter of his spear, who is the Lord of tempests, and his mighty ones come up to be marshalled in their line: then the trumpet soundeth again exceeding loud and long, and for many an hour the earth shall be deluged with the rain, and men shall shake when they hear the voice of God breaking the cedar and rending the moun-

tain-tops. That which gathereth long lasteth long; the little is always in a hurry, but the great can wait. "He that believeth shall not make haste," simply because believing makes him great; and God, on whom believers rest, makes no haste because of his greatness; he may well take his time, and go leisurely about his work. There is no need, we say, that the Lord our God, who is rich in years, should spend his time as we must needs do who have but slender store.

Besides, there is an advantage in his being slow—*it tries our faith.* We are getting weary, some of us, because we have little faith; but if the Church of Christ shall keep on from this day till another thousand years sending out the pick of her ministry to the most desolate regions to preach; if she shall continue to send her young, brave sons, fresh to the altar of distant martyrdom; if our Churches at home shall continue to pay a spiritual taxation like that which Israel paid when Solomon's temple was in the building; if every one of us shall be willing to spend and to be spent for God; and if the Church shall keep at that stretch for two thousand years to come; (we pray God she may not have the trial,) but if she should, then there will be honour unto her God, who by his grace sustained her, and there will be honour to her faith, which thus honoured God. To win a fight when it lasteth but for an hour, what is there in it? One gallant charge and the foemen have fled. Comrade, but that is a battle worthy to be written with your Waterloos and your Marathons, when hour after hour, and day after day, valour disdains to succumb, and patience endures the fight while foot to foot the soldiers stand. To see gallant courage fiercely longing for the charge, but obediently awaiting the signal. Look, brethren, how they stand like lions at bay, stand bearing wounds, and agony, and the horrors of death, until at last, the captain giveth the triumphant signal, and they dash upon their foes, the ranks of the enemy are broken, and the foemen fall at their feet. So is it to day. We are standing in our Churches, like British soldiers in their solid square, we roll our deadly musketry against our enemy, but the foe is in the distance, and we cannot reach him as we would. Great Master, thou shalt come, and then at one triumphant charge, we shall give but one great cheer—"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and they shall fly like chaff before the whirlwind, and like the mist before the storm.

Further, it is well that God should thus be long, *because he is unravelling revelation.* I fear me, I have seldom been in the position of those hearers, who would wish the preacher to be longer, but there have been books of which one could say when we have reached the last page, "Would that there were another volume, that our interest might continue!" Now, what is the history of the Church, but the great book of God's revelation of himself to man? The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to loose the seals, and to open the book for us, and year after year he reads another page, and yet another in the Church's history. Brethren, if Christ should come to-day, if we should have no more conflicts, no more difficulties, no more trials, then we might suppose that the book had come to its brilliant golden finis; but if it keepeth on a thousand years to come, so much the better: the glowing eyes of angels wish not for the end of the story, and the bright eyes of immortal spirits

before the throne, when it shall be all over, shall not regret that it was too long. No, let it go on, great Master; let a thousand years run on; our loving hearts will patiently bear it, as though it were but one day.

And more: the victory of Christ at the end will be all the greater, and the redemption all the more glorious, because of this long time of strife and confusion. I have often admired, in reading history, how in the grand duel between good and evil, God has seemed to give all the advantage to his foe. Did you notice this in the combat of old between Patience and Suffering? God is in Job; Job is on a dunghill: the messengers come in such an order as most naturally to break his spirit: at last he is touched in his bone, and in his flesh with sore blains, and yet in spite of that, Job on the dunghill, is master over the Prince of hell, with Providence at his back. God gave the foeman the advantage, and yet won the victory. So, in the greater battle which is waging now; when first the gospel was preached, learning, eloquence, and power, all these might aid the cause, but Christ disdained to take them. "No," said he, "my enemy shall have the learning; the philosophers of Greece shall have the wisdom of men; their orators shall wield all eloquence, but not my apostles; as for power, I have not chosen the great ones of this world." So that the eloquence, learning, pomp, and power of nations were put into the opposite scale, and then Christianity came out, like a naked wrestler, all unarmed against one that was clothed from head to foot in mail of proof. The gospel cometh out like a David with nothing but a sling and a stone against one the staff of whose spear is like a weaver's beam. See the hosts of Philistia come up armed to the teeth every one of them, and there are thousands of them: there is God's hero; he is but one man; he has no weapon save the decayed bone of an ass's jaw, but he dashes at them right and left, hip and thigh, with a great slaughter, and smites them till heaps upon heaps with the jaw bone of an ass has he slain a thousand men. Brethren, whenever you see anything in the world which would lead you to believe that the enemy is getting the upper hand, say, "Ah, it is only God throwing in the advantage on the side of his enemies." The battle was fair enough before, but he is giving them all on their side, letting them have every weapon, bidding them take all the power, and all the wit, and all the eloquence and learning. We will beat them yet. Now in the name of him that liveth and was dead once more we, who are God's servants, full of weakness, throw down the gauntlet against the world that seems to be omnipotent; against your learning, and your eloquence, and your multitudes, and your authorities, and your dignities, your powers and your state alliances, we still throw down the gauntlet; take it up, O earth, if thou darest, but remember when we make the challenge, we expect stern fighting. We know from God's authority, which cannot lie, that a glorious victory awaiteth us. Now see ye, brethren, this is why God is a thousand years about it. He can shake the old harlot of the seven hills to-morrow if he will; he can knock down the idol gods to-day if so it pleaseth him. To-night, before you and I go to sleep, every idol might be cast to the moles and to the bats if Jehovah willed it, but he does not. "No," says he, "they shall have their time; they shall have their opportunity; they shall strive against

me; I will hold in my power; I will not go forth against them; I will let them lay their plans with deliberation and execute their schemes at their leisure, but I will laugh at them in their preparations, and I will at last crush them in my hot displeasure;" and then the shout shall be the louder, and the choral song shall be the more mighty, and the everlasting hallelujah shall have a deeper bass, and yet it shall have a shriller note of glory when at the last the triumph shall be won. After all the four hundred years of Israel's bondage, Egypt's power was broken and Israel went free; while Miriam took her timbrel and danced before the Lord: so we also shall, in a few days, when all the adversaries are overthrown, take up for ourselves the same song of Moses and the Lamb—"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let them that hate thee become as the fat of rams."

I shall now leave my subject to the consideration of the faithful to cheer their hearts. If you think the work has been long and tedious, you will not think so any more, brother, if you obey Peter's exhortation, "Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." As to those present who know not Christ, may the one day of their conversion take place to-day; and that one day of God's grace and favour in their hearts they shall find to be as good as a thousand years spent in the pleasures of sin. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." God help us to believe, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ANOTHER AND A NOBLER EXHIBITION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 4TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."—Ephesians iii. 10.

ALL the world has been talking during the last three days of the splendid pageant which adorned the opening of the International Exhibition. Crowds have congregated in the palace of universal art; representatives of all the nations of the earth have journeyed for many a league to view its wonders; eminent personages of all empires have appeared in the gorgeous spectacle, and such a scene has glittered before the eyes of all men, as have never before in all respects been equalled, and may not for many a year find a successor to rival it. Wherefore all these gatherings? Why muster ye, all ye nations? Wherefore come ye hither, ye gazing sons of men? Surely your answer must be, that ye have come together that ye may see *the manifold wisdom of* MAN. As they walk along the aisles of the great Exhibition, what see they but the skill of man, first in this department, and then in the other—at one moment in the magnificent, at the next in the minute—at one instant in a work of elegance in ornament, in the next in a work of skill and usefulness: "manifold wisdom," the works and productions of many minds, the different hues and colours of thought, embodied in the various machines, and statues, and so forth, which human skill has been able to produce. We grant you that God has been most rightly recognized there, both in the solemn prayer of the Archbishop, and in the hymn of the Laureate; but still the great object, after all, was to behold the manifold wisdom of man, and had they taken away man's skill and man's art, what would there have been left? Brethren, may the greatest results follow from this gathering! We must not expect that it, or anything else short of the gospel, will ever bring about the universal reign of peace; we must never look to art and science to accomplish that triumph which is reserved for the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet may it spread the feelings of benevolence—may it bind together the scattered children of Adam—

may it fuse into a happy and blessed union the kindreds of men that were scattered abroad at Babel, and may it prepare the way, and open the gates, that the gospel may proceed to the uttermost ends of the earth!

It is, however, very far from my mind to direct your attention to the marvels which crowd the area of the huge temple of 1862. I invite you, rather, to follow me to a nobler exhibition than this, where crowds are gathering—not of mortals, but of immortal spirits. The temple is not of art and science, but of grace and goodness, built with living stones, cemented with the fair colours of atoning blood, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,"—that temple, the Church of the living God, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Into this great palace crowd ten thousand times ten thousand of the host of God, "cherubim and seraphim," or by whatsoever other names those bright intelligences may be known among themselves—"principalities and powers," the different degrees in the hierarchy of immortal spirits, if such there be—they are all represented as intently gazing upon the wondrous fabric which God has reared. Along the aisles of that Church, along the ages of its dispensations, stand the various trophies of divine grace and love—the jewel cases of virtues and graces which adorn the believer, the mementoes of triumphs gotten over sin and hardness of heart, and of victories achieved over temptation and trial; and as the spirits walk along these corridors full of divine workmanship, they stand, they gaze, they admire, and wonder, and speed back their way to heaven, and sing more loudly than before, hallelujah to the God whose manifold wisdom they have beheld in the Church of God below.

Beloved friends, our text is a strange one. If you will reflect that the angels, the elder-born of creatures when compared with us, have been with God for many an age; and yet I do not know that it is ever said that by anything else they ever learned "the manifold wisdom of God." They were with him when he made the earth and the heavens; perhaps during those long periods when the earth was a-forming—"In the beginning," when "God created the heavens and the earth," the angels were wont to visit this world, and to behold alive and in their glory those strange shapes of mystery which now we dig up in fossil from the earth. Certainly in that day when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face thereof," the angels knew the hidden treasure; and when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light," when that first ray of light seemed like a living finger to touch the earth and waken it to beauty, then seraphic fingers swept their heavenly harps, and "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Yet I do not learn, though they were with the Great Worker during the seven days of creation, though they saw "the cattle after their kind, and the fowls of the air after their kind," and the fish of the sea, and all the plants and herbs, yet I see not that in all this there was made known unto them "the manifold wisdom of God." Nay, more, when man, the Master's last work, walked through Eden,—when, with his fair consort by his side, he stood up to

praise the Maker, though he was "fearfully and wonderfully made," though in his mind and body there was a display of wisdom unrivalled before,—yet I do not learn that even in man, as a creature, there was made known "the manifold wisdom of God." Yes, and more than this: when other worlds were made, when the stars were kindled like glowing flames by light of Deity, if there be other peoples, and other kindreds, and other tribes in those myriads of far-off lands, I do not find in the creation of all those hosts of worlds which bestud the wide fields of ether, that there was then made known to celestial spirits "the manifold wisdom of God." Nay, more, in all the dispensations of divine Providence apart from the Church, in all the mystic revolutions of those wondrous wheels that are full of eyes, apart from the Church, there has not been made known to these beings to the fullest extent the wisdom of God. Ah! and, brethren, remember yet once more, that they with undimmed eye look upon the glory of him that sits upon the throne, so far as it can be seen by created vision; they behold the beatific vision; they are glistening in the splendours of Deity, and veil their faces when at his footstool they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;" and yet, though standing, as it were, in the sun, though they are foremost of all the creatures, nearest to the eternal throne, I do not read that by all this they have in the highest sense learned "the manifold wisdom of God."

What an idea, then, does this give us of the importance of the Church! Brethren, never let us despise any more the meanest member of it, since there is more to be beheld in the Church than in creation in its utmost breadth; more of the wisdom of God in the saving of souls than in the building the arches of the sky; nay, more of God to be seen than even heaven with all its splendours can otherwise reveal. Oh! let us open our eyes that we lose not those divine mysteries which angels desire to look into!

I have now already explained the meaning of the text; we have, therefore, but to direct your attention to those points of interest upon which angelic intelligence would be sure to linger; and we shall pray that, while we mention these in brief and running catalogue, our hearts may be led to meditate much upon the manifold, the varied wisdom of God displayed in the Church which Christ has bought with his blood.

I. And first, dear brethren, we think that the first object of attention in the Church to the principalities and powers, is THE SCHEME AND PLAN OF SAVING THE CHURCH. It is this that they so much admire and wonder at. It has been exceedingly well said by others, that if a Parliament had been held of all the spirits in heaven and in earth, and if it had been committed to this general assembly to ordain and fix upon a plan whereby God might be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, they must all have failed to achieve the task. Those lofty minds, doubtless, consider with delight the fact that in God's way of saving his Church, all his attributes shine out with undiminished lustre. God is just; they know it in heaven, for they saw Lucifer fall like lightning when God cast him out of his dwelling-place on account of sin. God is just; and as much so upon Calvary, where his Son hangs and bleeds "the just for

the unjust, to bring us to God," as he was when he cast down the son of the morning. The angels see in salvation this great wonder of justice and peace embracing each other—God as sternly just as if there were not a particle of mercy in his being, smiting his Son for the sin of his people with all the force of his might—God, yet as merciful as if he were not just, embracing his people as though they had never sinned, and loving them with a love which could not have been greater had they never transgressed. They understand how God so hated sin that he laid vengeance on his only begotten, and yet "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." As in the crowns of Oriental princes the most precious jewels shone in clusters, so as in one wonderful *corona* all the infinite attributes of God shine out at once in all their combined glory around thy cross, O Jesu, earth's wonder and heaven's prodigy! This difficulty, so delightfully met, so completely disposed of by the atonement of Christ, causes the angels to behold "the manifold wisdom of God."

But, further, when the angels see that by this great plan all the ruin that sin brought upon mankind is removed, they again wonder at the wisdom of God; and when they especially notice the way in which it was removed, the strange and mysterious methods which God used for rolling away the stone from the door of the human sepulchre, they yet more bow down with awe. Did we lose Eden in Adam? Lo, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us a better than Paradise! Did we lose the dignity of manhood? Lo, to-day we regain it in Christ; "for thou hast put all things under his feet." Did we lose spotless purity? Again we have obtained it in Christ; for we are justified through his righteousness and washed in his blood. Did we lose communion with God? We have obtained it this day; for "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Did we lose heaven itself? Ah! heaven is ours again; for in him we have obtained an inheritance, and are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And all this mischief is made to destroy itself, God overruling it, to be its own destruction; the dragon stung with his own sting; Goliath killed with his own sword; Death is slain by the death of the man who was crucified; sin is put away by the great sin-offering, who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" the grave is plagued by its own victim when Christ lay a captive within it. Satan casteth out Satan in this case. We rise by man as by man we fell: "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." The worm in whom Satan triumphed, is the worm in whom God is glorified. It was man whom Satan sought to make the instrument of divine dishonour, and it is man in whom God triumphs over all the crafts and cruelties of hell. This the angels wonder at, for they see in this scheme of salvation, meeting as it does every mischief, and meeting it on its own ground, "the manifold wisdom of God."

Observe, also, that through the great scheme of salvation by the atonement, God is more glorified than he would have been if there had been no fall, and consequently no room for a redemption. The angels admire "the manifold wisdom of God" in the whole story of the human race,

seeing that in the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, God is more glorified than he would have been had it all been written in letters of gold, without one sin or one suffering on the part of the human race. O Lord! when thou didst permit for a moment thy people to go astray like lost sheep, there might have been silence in heaven, since thine enemy had triumphed, since the precious ones whom thou hadst loved were given up into the hand of the enemy; when the jewels of Christ were lost for a little season amidst the miry clay and ruins of the fall, there might have been a furling of Jehovah's banner; for perhaps it seemed to angels as though God had been defeated in his highest praise; but when Christ comes back "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," wearing upon his royal head the crown in which every jewel is securely set that once was in the hand of the enemy—when the shepherd comes back from the mountains, bearing on his shoulders the lost sheep which had gone astray, there is more joy in heaven over the lost ones that are found again than there could have been over all of them, had they never gone astray. The deep bass of the fall shall swell the song of the restoration; the hollow moans, as they seemed to be, when heard alone, shall but make a part of the grand swell of the eternal song, as it shall peal up to the throne of the Lord God of hosts. Brethren, if you would think for awhile upon the whole work of God, taking in it the fall as being foreseen and foreknown, until the day when all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne, I think you will be struck with its glory as a whole. It was within the compass of the power of God to make creatures that would love him, to make beings that would be attached to him by the very closest ties; but—I speak with reverence—I do not see how omnipotence itself, apart from the fall and the redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, when he gave himself to die for us, could have made such creatures as the redeemed will be in heaven. Brethren, if we had never fallen and never been redeemed, we could never have sung of redeeming grace and dying love. We could not, and the angels could not; we could not have known the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Feasted with heavenly food, we might have admired his bounty, but not as we now do when we eat the flesh of Christ; made to drink the wine pressed from heaven's own clusters, we might have blessed the giver of the feast, but not as we now can do, when we drink the blood of Jesus as our sweet wine; pure and holy, we could have praised him, and we should have done so, but not as we now can, when we have "washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is a nearer relationship now than there could have been in any other way, if God had not taken humanity into alliance with himself, if the Word had not been made flesh and dwelt among us. I say there may have been other plans, but certainly no mortal mind can conceive any other. This seems to be the most wonderful, the most godlike, the most divine, that a creature shall be made perfectly free; that that creature shall offend, shall discover the justice of God through the punishment being laid upon a substitute, but shall learn the love of God through that substitute being God himself. This creature was ordained to be attached to

the Eternal One by ties of filial relationship, by bonds of affection so strong that the pains of the rack and the flames of the fire shall not be able to separate it from the love of God; and in heaven this creature shall feel that it owes nothing to itself, nothing to its own first creation, but all to him who loved it and who bought it with his blood; and therefore this grateful being shall praise God after a soul superior by many high degrees to the attainment of any other. Oh! dear friends, I think if we study the subject for a few hours alone, we shall see that in nothing that God has done is there such a discovery of his wisdom as in the plan of redeeming love. Go round about her, O angels of the Lord; mark ye well her bulwarks, and tell the towers thereof; consider her palaces; behold the impregnable strength of covenant engagements; see the largeness and broadness of electing love; behold the veracity and truthfulness of divine promises; see the fulness of grace and efficacy in the pardoning blood; see the faithfulness and the immovability of the divine affection, when once it is set on men; and when ye have admired the whole, go back, ye spirits, and more sweetly than before unite with us in our song—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and blessing, and majesty, and power, and dominion for ever and ever."

II. Secondly, without a doubt the wisdom of God is made known to angels and principalities in THE VARIOUS DISPENSATIONS THROUGH WHICH THE CHURCH HAS PASSED. At first the Church was indeed a little flock, a few chosen out of the mass—Abram, the Syrian, ready to perish, and a few godly ones in his household. Then the stream widened a little, and there became twelve tribes; and soon the dispensation became more clear; Moses was raised up, and Aaron, whom God had chosen. Then the angels desired to look into the typical rites and ceremonies of that ancient dispensation. They were pictured standing on the mercy seat, with wings outstretched, with their faces bent downwards as if they would fain behold the secret which the golden lid concealed. Doubtless, as they saw the sacrifice, whether it was the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, or the sin-offering—as they saw the gorgeous ceremonies of the tabernacle, or the yet more splendid rites of the temple, they admired the wisdom of God; as it was set forth in the dim symbol and shadow, how much more must they have admired it, when the Sun of righteousness arose with healing beneath his wings, when they saw the sacrifice superseded by the one great offering, the high priest set aside by the man, who having once offered one sacrifice for ever, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; how they have marvelled since that time as truth after truth has been expounded in the experience of believers, as doctrine after doctrine has been revealed to the Church of Christ by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit! Oh! brethren, the angels, when they compare the past with the present, and again, the present with the past, the choosing of the Jewish olive, and the leaving out of the rest of the trees, and anon, the grafting-in of the Gentiles from the wild olive, and the casting out of the natural branches, how much they must have admired the singular variety of God's dispensations, when they know, as certainly they do, that his grace remains the same!

In climbing or in descending a lofty mountain, one is struck with the

sudden change of views. You looked on the right just now, and you saw a populous city on the plain; but you turn a corner, and looking through a break in the forest you see a broad lake; and in a moment or two your road winds again, and you will see a narrow valley and another range of mountains beyond. Every time you turn, there is a new scene presented to you. So it would seem to the angelic spirits. When first they began to ascend the hill on which the Church stands, "Mount Zion, which is above, the mother of us all," they saw the wisdom of God in the form as Abraham saw it; a turn in the road, and they saw it as Moses beheld it; another, and they had a view as David was wont to gaze upon it; and anon, when they ascended to clearer light, and the mists that hung about the mountain-side had all been scattered, and had fallen in one gracious shower of grace, they saw it as the apostles beheld it, when they stood upon Mount Olivet; and since then, through every trial of the Church, as the eighteen centuries have rolled on since the Master went up to heaven, they have been constantly catching fresh views and seeing fresh manifestations of the varied and constantly-changing wisdom of the unchanging God, as it is manifested in his dealings to the Church. So that both in the dispensations, as well as in the plan, there is made known to principalities and powers "the manifold wisdom of God."

III. Thirdly, to be brief upon each point, we may conclude, without any doubt, that they mainly see the wisdom of God in his Church, IN THE CHURCH'S COVENANT HEAD AND REPRESENTATIVE. Oh! when first they heard that the Lord of life and glory was to be made flesh and to dwell among us, how they must have admired the plan of heaven's going down to earth that earth might come up to heaven! The babe in the manger commanded all their songs. When they saw that babe become a man, and heard him preach, how they must have marvelled at the wisdom of sending God himself to be God's own prophet! When they saw that man living a life of perfect holiness, how they must have clapped their wings at the thought that man could see perfection now in God's own self, shrouded in human form! But when it came to atonement, and they learned that God's people must be crucified in Christ, how struck must they have been, as the thought burst upon them for the first time, that the whole host of the elect were to sweat great drops of blood through one man,—that they were to be flagellated, to be scourged, bruised, and spat upon, in one man,—that the host of the chosen were to carry the cross of their condemnation upon one man's shoulders,—that that one man was for them all, to take all their load of guilt, and, nailed to the tree, bleed away his life for the whole body. Oh! I say, when they saw that lowly man, with all the sins of the whole chosen company resting upon his shoulders, and knew this solitary man was God—able to carry the whole—they must have marvelled, indeed, at the wisdom of God. And when that triumphant man cried, "It is finished!" having drained the cup of damnation to its utmost dregs, till there remained not one black drop for another of the elect to drink,—when that one man descended into the grave, and the whole company of the faithful were buried with him, oh, how they marvelled! When again they beheld the second Adam

bursting his cerements, rending the chains of death as though, like another Samson, he had broken the green withes of the Philistines as though they were but tow, how astonished they were when they thought that the elect were risen in that glorified person! And when that man was received up into heaven, and the cloud hid him from mortal view, how they rejoiced to see him rise! but much more to think that we also were risen in him, and in him had ascended up on high,—in him the whole Church, I say, leading their captivity captive! When that representative personage, with acclamation beyond all measure, rose to the throne of the Father, and took his seat at the right hand of the dreadful Majesty on high, how wonderful must have been the admiration of the spirits when they thought that he had raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! Perhaps there is no doctrine that is more astounding to Christians than this. I know if we want a theme that will enlarge our mind, the subject of the union of the chosen with Christ is certainly the most expansive.

"O sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!

One when he died, one when he rose,
One when he triumphed o'er his foes;
One when in heaven he took his seat,
And angels sang all hell's defeat.

This sacred tie forbids all fears,
For all he has and is is ours;
With him our head we stand or fall,
Our life, our surety, and our all."

"The manifold wisdom of God," in thus constituting Christ the covenant head and representative of the elect in all its various shapes and shades, must have been discovered to angelic beings.

IV. Though that were a theme that might require a full discourse, we leave it at once to turn to another. In the fourth place, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to principalities and powers IN THE CONVERSION OF EVERY CHILD OF GOD.

There are some very singular implements in this present Great Exhibition; marvellous feats of human skill; but there is one thing they have not there that is to be found in the Church of the living God, and that is a heart-melter, an instrument for turning stone to flesh. There are inventions for melting granite, and for liquifying flints, but I know of no invention but one, and that is not to be found in any earthly show, for melting the adamant of the human heart. Now when the Lord takes the profane man, or the infidel, or the proud self-righteous Pharisee, or some tall, hectoring, careless sinner, and casts his heart into a fountain filled with Jesus' blood, and it begins to melt with penitence, the angels see the matchless wisdom of God. But I am sure, also, that there is not in the Exhibition another instrument called a

heart-healer; an invention for binding up broken hearts and making them one again, and healing all their wounds; but the Lord is pleased by the same instrument by which he breaks hearts to heal them. That blood which melts the flint restores us the heart of flesh. Having first melted the heart, he next shows his matchless skill by taking away despair, despondency, and terror, and giving to the poor conscience perfect peace and rest, nay, exulting joy and boundless liberty. As the angels see the proud man bow his knee, as they hear him in his silent chamber pour out his heart in sighs and groans, they say, "It is well, great God; it is well;" and as they see him come down from that chamber light of foot and joyous of heart because his sin is all forgiven, with his groans all turned into songs, the angels say, "It is well, great God; it is well; thou woundest, but thou dost heal; thou killest, and thou makest alive." Conversion is the greatest prodigy that we know of. If there be no such things as miracles to-day, believe me I have neither eyes nor ears. But you say, "What miracles?" I answer, not miracles in smitten rocks that yield rivers of water or seas that are divided by prophetic rod, but miracles in hearts and consciences, obedient to holy, heavenly power. I have seen in my short life more miracles and stranger than Moses ever wrought, and wonders great as Christ Jesus himself ever performed on flesh and blood; for they are his miracles to-day that are wrought through the gospel. If it were well just now, I might point to some in these galleries and on this ground-floor, and ask them to tell what miracles God did for them, and how they here are in one happy circle to-day met for the praise of God; men who once were everything that was vile; but they are washed, but they are sanctified. The tear starts in their eye now when they think of the drunkard's cup and of the swearer's oath with which they were once so well acquainted; ah! too, and of the dens and kens of filth and of lasciviousness which they once knew; and they are here, loving and praising their Lord. Oh! there are some in this house to-day who, if they could speak, would say they are the greatest sinners out of hell, and the mightiest wonders out of heaven. If our gospel be hid, it is only hid to those who wilfully shut their eyes to it. When one sees harlots reclaimed, thieves, drunkards, swearers made to be saints of the living God, do not tell us that the gospel has lost its power. O Sirs! do not dream that we shall believe you while we can see this power, while we can feel it in our own souls, while every day we hear of conversions, while scarce a week rolls on without some score of brands being plucked from the eternal burning. And, I say, if the Church of God on earth admires these conversions, what must angels do who are more acquainted with the guilt of sin, and know more of the loveliness of holiness, and understand better the secret heart of man than we do? How must they gladly and exultingly admire in each distinct conversion as it presents phases different from any other, the "manifold wisdom of God!" That ingenious toy called the kaleidoscope at every turn presents some new form of beauty, so the different converts who are brought to Christ by the preaching of the Word are every one unlike the other; there is something to distinguish each case; hence by them to the very letter our

text is proved, the manifold wisdom, the much varied wisdom of God is displayed. I have sometimes understood the word "manifold" as comparing grace to a precious treasure that is wrapped up in many folds, first this, then the next, then the next must be unfolded, and as you unwrap fold after fold, you find something precious each time; but it will be long ere you and I shall have unwrapped the last fold and shall have found the wisdom of God in its pure glittering lustre, lying stored within as the angels behold it in the Church of the living God.

V. But time has failed me, and therefore I must leave points upon which I wanted to dwell. The principalities and powers to this day find great opportunities for studying the wisdom of God in THE TRIALS AND EXPERIENCE OF BELIEVERS, in the wisdom which subjects them to trial, in the grace which sustains them in it, in the power which brings them out of it, in the wisdom which overrules the trial for their good, in the grace which makes the trial fit the back or strengthens the back for the burden. They see wisdom in the prosperity of Christians when their feet stand like hinds' feet upon their high places; they see the same in the despondencies of believers when even in the lowest depths they still say "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." As every day brings to us our daily bread, so every day brings to heaven its daily theme of wonder, and the angels receive fresh stores of knowledge from the ever-new experience of the people of God. They lean from the battlements of heaven to-day to gaze on you, ye tried believers; they look into your furnace as did the King of Babylon, and they see the fourth man with you like unto the Son of God. They track you, O ye children of Israel in the wilderness; they see the places of your encampment and the land to which you are hastening; and as they mark the fiery cloudy pillar that conducts you and the angel of God's house that leads the van and brings up the rear, they discover in every step of the way the wonderful wisdom of God.

VI. And lastly, beyond all controversy, WHEN THE LAST OF GOD'S PEOPLE SHALL BE BROUGHT IN, and the bright spirits shall begin to wander through the heavenly plains and converse with all the redeemed Spirits, they will then see "the manifold wisdom of God." Let the angel speak awhile for himself. "Here," saith he, "I see men of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, from Britain to Japan, from the frozen north to the burning zone beneath the equator; here I see souls of all ages, babes hither snatched from the womb and breast, and spirits that once knew palsied age to whom the grasshopper was a burden. Here I see men from all periods, from Adam and Abel down to the men who were alive and remain at the coming of the Son of God from heaven. Here I see them from the days of Abraham, and the times of David, and the periods of the Apostles, and the seasons of Luther and of Wickliffe, even to the last times of the Church. Here I see them of all classes. There is one who was a king, and at his side, as his fellow, is another that tugged the oar as a galley-slave. There I see a merchant prince who counted not his riches dear unto him, and by his side a poor man who was rich in faith and heir of the kingdom. There I see the poet who could sing on earth of Paradise Lost and Regained,

and by his side one who could not put two words together, but who knew the Paradise Lost and the Paradise Regained within the Eden of his own nature, the garden of his own heart. Here I see Magdalene and Saul of Tarsus, repenting sinners of all shades and saints of all varieties, those who showed their patience on a lingering sick bed, those who triumphed with holy boldness amid the red flames, those who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy; the monk who shook the world, and he who cast salt into the stream of doctrine and made it wholesome and pure; the man who preached to his millions, and brought tens of thousands of souls to Christ, and the humble cottager who knew but this Bible true, and herself the partaker of the life of Christ—here they all are, and as the spirits wander and look first at this and then at that—first one trophy of grace, and then at another monument of mercy, they will all exclaim, "How manifold are thy works, O God! In wisdom hast thou made them all. Heaven is full of thy goodness which thou hast wrought for the sons of men."

And now, dear friends, the sermon is done, when I ask you just these questions; the first shall be a question for the children of God, and the other for those who know him not.

First, to the children of God. Do you think you and I have sufficiently considered that we are always looked upon by angels, and that they desire to learn by us the wisdom of God? The reason why our sisters appear in the House of God with their heads covered is "because of the angels." The apostle says that a woman is to have a covering upon her head, covered because of the angels, since the angels are present in the assembly and they mark every act of indecorum, and therefore everything is to be conducted with decency and order in the presence of the angelic spirits. Think of that, then, when this afternoon we shall be talking together. Let us not talk in such a way that a visitor from heaven might be grieved with us; and when we are in our general assemblies met together, let us not discuss ignoble themes, but let the matters which we discuss be truly edifying, seasoned with salt. Especially in our families, might we not say more about Christ than we do? Do we not often spend days, perhaps weeks, without making any mention of such things as we could wish angels to hear? Ye are watched, brethren, ye are watched by those that love you. The angels love us and bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against the stones. They encamp about our habitations; let us entertain these royal guests. Since they cannot eat our bread and sit at our table to partake of our good cheer, let us talk of subjects which will delight them in a manner with which they shall be gratified, and let their presence be to us a motive why we should so conduct ourselves that to angels and principalities may be made known by us the wisdom of God.

And, lastly, what think some of you, would angels say of *your* walk and conversation? Well, I suppose you don't care much about them, and yet you should. For who but angels will be the reapers at the last, and who but they shall be the convoy to our spirits across the last dark stream? Who but they shall carry our spirit like that of Lazarus into

the Father's bosom? Surely we should not despise them. What has your conduct been? Ah, sirs, it need not that the preacher speak. Let Conscience have her perfect work. There are some here over whom angels, could their eyes have known a tear, would have wept day and night. Ye have been almost persuaded to be Christians. Ye have known the struggles of conscience, and ye have said, "I would to God I were altogether such as the saints are!" but ye are unconverted still. Stay, spirit, guardian spirit, thou who hast watched over this son of a sainted mother, wing not back thy disappointed flight to heaven! He relents, he relents. Now the Spirit of God is moving in him. "*It shall be*," saith he, "*it shall be*," "I repent and believe in Jesus," but oh, Spirit, thou wilt be disappointed yet, for he is about to say, "In a little time, go thy way for a little season, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Spirit, thou wilt be disappointed yet, but if the soul shall say "Now, even now, in this house of prayer, I cast myself upon the finished atonement of Christ; I trust in him to save me;" wing thy flight aloft, thou glorious Spirit, tell the cherubs around the throne that the prodigal has returned, and an heir of heaven has been born; let heaven keep holiday, and let us go into our homes rejoicing, for he that was dead is alive again, and he that was lost is found.

May the Spirit of God do this, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 11TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."—Genesis xlv. 3—5.

JOSEPH is a very eminent type of Christ. When he was hated of his brethren because he protested against their sins, and when they sold him for twenty pieces of silver, he was doubtlessly a portrait of the despised and rejected of men whom his disciple betrayed. Afterwards in his temptations in the house of Potiphar, in the slander and consequent imprisonment in the round house of Pharaoh's prison, in his after advancement, till he became lord over all the land of Egypt, we clearly see our blessed Lord right well pourtrayed. Indeed so well is the picture drawn that there is scarcely a stroke even though it should seem to be a mere accidental incident of the picture which has not its symbolic meaning. You shall read the history of Joseph through twenty times, and yet you shall not have exhausted the type; you shall begin again and find still some fresh likeness between this despised son of Rachel, and the Son of Mary who is also God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

It is not however my business this morning to enter into a full description of Joseph as the type of Christ, I have a rather more practical object in hand. I shall endeavour in the Lord's strength to deal with tried and troubled consciences, and if it shall be my happy lot to be the means of cheering some sorrowing heart, and opening some blind eye to see the personal beauties, and the intense affection of the Lord Jesus, I shall be but too glad to have been God's messenger to your hearts.

To tarry no longer, but to proceed at once to so good an errand, hopeful that God will help us to accomplish it, I shall direct your attention to the picture before us as being a representation of the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ deals with his erring brethren, those whom his Father has given him, and whom he has purchased with his blood.

It seems to me that the condition of Judah and his brethren is a very notable picture of *the state of sinners when they are awakened by the Holy Spirit*, that the disguise which Joseph assumed when he dealt so roughly with them, is *a masterly representation of the manner in which Jesus Christ, the loving one, seems to deal hardly and harshly with poor coming sinners*, and that thirdly, the manifestation which Joseph afterward made to his brethren, is but a faint representation of the *declaration of love which Jesus makes to repenting spirits when at last he reveals himself to them in mercy.*

I. We think that the condition and posture of Judah and his brethren at the feet of the throne of Joseph, trembling in alarm, well describe THE CONDITION AND POSITION OF EVERY TRULY AWAKENED SINNER.

By different methods Joseph had at last awakened the consciences of his ten brethren. The point which seemed to have been brought out most prominently before their consciences was this: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." And though, in the speech which Judah made, it was not necessary to accuse themselves of crime, yet in the confession, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants," Joseph could see evidently enough, that the recollection of the pit and of the sale to the Ishmaelites was vividly before their mind's eye. Now, beloved, when the Lord the Holy Ghost arouses sinners' consciences, this is the great sin which he brings to mind: "Of sin because they believed not on me." Once the careless soul thought it had very little to answer for: "I have not done much amiss," said he, "a speedy reformation may wipe out all that has been awry, and my faults will soon be forgotten and forgiven; but now, on a sudden, the conscience perceives that the soul is guilty of despising, rejecting, and slaughtering Christ. What a sin is this, my brethren! And what pangs we endured when first this crime was laid to our charge, and we were compelled to plead guilty to it! O Lord Jesus, did I accuse thee to thine enemies? Did I betray thee? Did I adjudge thee to the cross? Were my cries virtually heard in the streets, "Crucify him, crucify him?" Is it true that my sins were the nails which fastened thee to the tree? Is it so, that I had a share in thy bloody murder—a tragedy by which the world became a deicide, and man the murderer of his own Redeemer? It is even so; if our conscience be in a right state, we are forced to acknowledge it. Dost thou not know, sinner, every time thou dost prefer the pleasures of this world to the joys of heaven, thou dost spit in the face of Christ; every time when to get gain in thy business, thou doest an unrighteous thing, thou art like Judas selling him for thirty pieces of silver; every time thou makest a false profession of religion, thou givest him a traitor's kiss; every sermon which you hear, which makes a temporary impression on your mind, which impression you afterwards blot out, makes you more and more Christ's despiser and rejector; every word you have spoken against him, every hard thought you have had of him, has helped to complete your complicity with the great crowd which gathered around the cross of Calvary, to mock and jeer the Lord of

life and glory. Now, if there be any sin which will make a man deeply penitent, I think that this sin when it is really brought home to the conscience will affect us. To slay him who did me no hurt, the holy and the harmless One! To assist in hounding to the tree the man who scattered blessings with both his hands, and who had no thought, nor care, nor love, save for those who hated him. To pierce the hands that touched the leper, and that broke the bread, and multiplied the fishes! To fasten to the accursed wood the feet which had often carried his weary body upon painful journeys of mercy! Oh! this is base indeed. But when I think he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*, that he chose *me*, before the stars were made, or the heavens upreared upon their everlasting arches, and that I, when he came to me in the gospel, should have rejected and despised, and even mocked at him, this is intensely, infinitely cruel. Jesus, thou dost forgive me, but I can never forgive myself for such a sin as this.

Dear friends, has the Holy Spirit made you feel that you are guilty? If so, I am glad of it, for when we once feel guilty concerning the death of Jesus, our brother, it is not long before he will reveal himself to us in mercy, blotting out our sin for ever.

A second thought, however, which tended to make Joseph's brethren feel in a wretched plight was this, that they now discovered that they were in Joseph's hands. There stood Joseph, second to none but Pharaoh in all the empire of Egypt. Legions of warriors were at his beck and command; if he should say, "take these men, bind them hand and foot, or cut them in pieces," none could interpose; he was to them as a lion, and they were as his prey, which he could rend to pieces at his will. Now to the awakened sinner, this also is a part of his misery, that he is entirely in the hands of that very Christ whom he once despised; for that Christ who died has now become the judge of the quick and dead, he has power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as his Father has given him. The Father judgeth no man, he has committed all judgment to the Son. Dost thou see this, sinner, he whom thou despised is thy Master? The moth beneath thy finger, which thou canst crush, and that cannot escape from thee, may well fear, but thus art thou beneath the fingers of the crucified Son of God. To-day, he whom thou hast despised, has thee absolutely at his will; he has but to will it and the breath is gone from thy nostrils, and while yet in thy seat thou art a corpse, and more, at his will thou art in hell amidst its flames. Oh! what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, for even our God is a consuming fire.

Remember, sinner, you are in his hands in such a way that except ye repent, and receive him—except ye "kiss the Son," at once he may be angry, and ye may "perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." For lo! he cometh riding upon the clouds of judgment. Jesus of Nazareth cometh, robed in majesty; the books shall be opened; and he shall divide the nations as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Then in vain shall ye ask the pitiless rocks to give ye shelter in their flinty bowels; or the stern mountains to conceal you in their hollow caverns, ye shall seek to hide from the face of him that sitteth upon the

throne, but neither heaven nor earth, nor hell shall afford you shelter; for everywhere the eyes of him that wept shall follow you like flames of fire: and the hand of him that was once nailed to the tree shall crush you as a cluster in the hand of the gleaner of grapes. You shall feel that it is an awful thing to have turned long-suffering mercy into righteous hatred. You shall know that to have rejected mercy is to have drawn down upon your head the full fury of the justice of the avenger. Yet, further, there was another thought which combined to make Joseph's brethren feel still more wretched; being in his hands, they felt also in their souls that they deserved to be there. We are verily guilty said they. They offered no apologies, nor extenuations, for that one sin—that crying sin. They might for the matter of Benjamin: but they said, we are verily guilty concerning our brother. Oh! my brother in Christ; thou knowest what it is to have the Holy Spirit in thy heart, making thee plead guilty. Well do I remember when I stood at the bar of God's justice and heard the accusation read out against me. Nothing could I answer, but guilty only. Indeed, my guilt was so plainly before my eyes that my lips could not frame a denial, and had the judge put on the black cap that day, and said "Take him back to the place from whence he came, and give him his portion with the tormentors," I should have been lost, but the great God would have been most just and righteous. Careless sinners may talk about the hardness of God in condemning man to punishment, but once let the Holy Ghost show man the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and you will never hear a word about that. No! the sinner cries, Lord, whatever thou canst do with me, thou canst not chastise me more than I deserve. Though thou shouldst crush me beneath thy feet, or though thou shouldst pile up the fires of Tophet, and thy breath should be as the stream of brimstone to kindle it, yet thou couldst not curse too heavily or consume too fiercely thy traitorous, rebellious, depraved, and infamous creature. I deserve everything except thy love and thy pity; and if thou givest me these, I shall be compelled to say, for ever and ever, that thou gavest grace to the most undeserving—the most unworthy rebel that ever profaned thy universe. Brethren, when conscience goes against a man, he has a stern enemy to contend with. When it is written "David's heart smote him," such blows come home. So is it with every sinner that is truly led to see his own state. He will feel that he is not only guilty, and that he is in the hands of one from whom he cannot escape; but he will feel that it is right he should be so; and the only wonder he will have in his own mind is that he has been out of hell so long; that the long-suffering and mercy of God have been so marvellously extended to him.

Under a sense of all these things—note what the ten brethren did. They began to plead. Ah! nothing makes a man pray like a sense of sin. When we stand before God guilty, then our groans and sighs and tears make true and real supplication. I fear me there are some of you present here who have from infancy repeated a form of prayer who have never prayed in your lives, ay and some of you too who use an extemporary utterance and yet who never pray. I do not think men generally pray as a matter of duty. When men fall down in the streets

and break their limbs they do not cry out as a matter of duty, they cry because they cannot help it, and it seems to me that such a prayer God hears, that comes out of a man because he cannot help praying, when the deep agony of his spirit makes him groan, when he cannot be kept from his secret chamber, when he would sooner pray behind a hedge, or in a field, or in a garret, or even in the streets, than not pray at all. If there were an edict issued that no man should pray at all, the really praying man would go into Daniel's lions' den, for he could no more cease to pray than cease to breathe. Can the hart in the wilderness cease from panting for the water brooks? Can a sick child cease from crying for its mother? So the living soul cries after God because he cannot help panting after him. He must pray or he must die, he must find grace or perish and therefore in his sore extremity—from an intense and awful agony of heart he cries again and again, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This is the prayer that God heareth; such are the petitions which are acceptable to the Lord Jehovah.

Brethren, will you look at your own selves and at your own experience this morning and see if you ever were brought down to the spot where Judah and his brethren stood, for I fear we have never been brought rightly unless we have been brought here. He that was never condemned I think was never forgiven, he who never confessed his guilt cannot have had a pardon, and if we have never trembled before Jesus the judge, we can never have rejoiced before Jesus the elder brother.

II. We turn, however, now to remark, that THE SINGULARLY ROUGH BEHAVIOUR OF JOSEPH IS A NOTABLE REPRESENTATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST DEALS WITH SOULS UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN.

Joseph always was their brother, always loved them, had a heart full of compassion to them even when he called them spies. Kind words were often hastening to his lips, yet for their good he showed himself to be as a stranger and even as an enemy, so that he might bring them very low and prostrate before the throne.

My dear friends, our Lord Jesus Christ often does this with truly awakened souls whom he means to save. Perhaps to some of you who are to-day conscious of guilt but not of mercy, Christ seems as a stern and angry Judge; you think of him as one who can by no means spare the guilty; your only idea of him is of one who would say to you, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God." When you read the Scriptures, your mind perhaps is led to dwell upon his denunciations rather than upon his promises. Such dreadful chapters as the twenty-fifth of Matthew are more upon your mind than those blessed portions in John, such as "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." When you do think of Jesus it is not as of one who is saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But you rather think you hear him say, "Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites." Poor hearts, you discern all the sternness of his upbraidings, but not the softness and gentleness of his compassion. You see him dealing fiercely with Pharisees, and reason that he will be even more severe with you; nay, you think you have had

some proofs that the Lord is not willing to bless you. As Joseph took Simeon before their eyes and put him in prison, as he laid heavy things to his brethren's charge, and said to them, "Ye are spies, to see the nakedness of the land are you come; by the life of Pharoah surely ye are spies," and as he demanded of them to bring Benjamin down or else he would never see their face again, so you think that Jesus Christ has treated you. You went to him in prayer; but instead of getting an answer he seemed to shut up your prayer in prison and keep it like Simeon bound before your eyes. Yea, instead of telling you that there was mercy, he said to you as with a harsh voice, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." He appeared to shut his ear to your petitions and to have none of your requests, and to say to you, "Except ye renounce a right eye sin and a right arm pleasure, and give up your Benjamin delights, ye shall see my face no more," and you have come to think, poor soul, that Christ is hard and stern, and whereas he is ever the gentle Mediator receiving sinners and eating with them, whereas his usual voice is, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," to you he seemeth no such person, for he has put on a disguise, and ye understand not who and what he is.

But you will perceive, brethren, in reading the narrative, that even when Joseph disguised himself there was still much kindness discoverable in his conduct: so to the awakened sinner, even while Jesus appears to deal hardly, there is something sweet and encouraging amid it all. Do you not remember what Joseph did for his brethren? Though he was their judge he was their host too; he invited them to a great feast; he gave to Benjamin five times as much as to any of them; and they feasted even at the king's table. And so, poor sinner under an awakened conscience, you have occasional feastings at the table of hope. I know while I was under distress myself I did have some glimpses of hope. Oh, there were times when his name was very sweet! There were seasons in the thick darkness when some few rays of light flashed in; when like the dog that eateth the crumbs under the table, now and then there fell a big crust, and my soul was feasted for awhile. So has it been with you. Christ has rebuked and chastened you, but still he has sent you messes from his royal table. Ay, and there is another thing he has done for you, he has given you corn to live upon while under bondage. You would have despaired utterly if it had not been for some little comfort that he afforded you; perhaps you would have put an end to your life—you might have gone desperately into worse sin than before, had it not been that he filled your sack at seasons with the corn of Egypt. But mark, he has never taken any of your money yet, and he never will. He has always put your money in the sack's mouth. You have come with your resolutions and with your good deeds, but when he has given you comfort he has always taken care to show you that he did not confer it because of any good thing you had in your hands. When you went down and brought double money with you, yet the double money too was returned. He would have nothing of you: he has taught you as much as that, and you begin to feel now that if he

should bless you, it must be without money and without price. Ay, poor soul, and there is one other point upon which thine eye may rest with pleasure; he has sometimes spoken to thee comfortably. Did not Joseph say to Benjamin "God be gracious unto thee, my son?" And so, sometimes, under a consoling sermon, though as yet you are not saved, you have had a few drops of comfort. Oh! ye have gone sometimes out of the house of prayer as light as the birds of the air, and though you could not say "He is mine and I am his," yet you had a sort of inkling that the match would come off one day. He had said—"God be gracious to thee, my son." You half thought, though you could not speak it loud enough to let your heart distinctly hear it, you half thought that the day would come when your sins would be forgiven; when the prisoner should leap to lose his chains; when you should know Joseph your brother to have accepted and loved your soul. I say, then, Christ disguises himself to poor awakened sinners just as Joseph did, but even amidst the sternness of his manner, for awhile there is such a sweet mixture of love, that no troubled one need run into despair.

But, dear friends, I am met by a question. Some one asks, "Why doth Jesus thus deal with some coming sinners? Why doth he not always meet them at once as he does with some, while they are yet a great way off, and fall upon their necks and kiss them?" Perhaps we can answer this question by another. Why did Joseph thus hide himself, and not manifest himself to his own flesh? The answer is here; Joseph knew there was a prophecy to be fulfilled; the sun, and moon, and eleven stars must make obeisance to him; and their sheaves must bow down before his sheaf. So there is a prophecy concerning us—"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;" and were it not that Christ doth thus deal roughly with us, perhaps we should never bow ourselves with that deep humiliation and prostration of spirit, which is necessary for *our* good as well for *his* glory. I am sure that any of us who have passed through this state of mind, feel it a privilege to bow down before him. All hail, Jesu! We bring forth the royal diadem and crown thee, Lord of all. We wish not to dispute thy sovereignty, nor to interfere with thine absolute dominion. Give him all the glory; give him all the honour. Our spirit boweth down with even deeper reverence than the cherubim, who bow before him with veiled faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Besides, my dear friends, Joseph's brethren would not have been convinced of their sin at all, if it had not been for this. It was needful that they should know the greatness of the wrong, that they might know the value of the free pardon. The delay of manifested mercy has done much good to many of the saints; it compelled them to search the fountains of the great deep of their natural depravity, and led them to admire the freeness and richness of divine grace. We should have been but poor fools in Christ's school, if it had not been for the rod with which he whipped us, and the ruler with which he knocked our knuckles in our early days. That black board of conviction was a useful implement enough in the school house. If he had not ploughed deep, there never would have been a hundred-fold

harvest. Since he would build a high house of joy in our hearts, there was a "needs-be" that he should dig out deep foundations of sorrow, and he did it so for our lasting and perpetual good. Could John Bunyan have ever written "Pilgrim's Progress," if he had not felt abounding sin, and rejoiced in "Grace abounding?" Could he have ever compiled such a wondrous work as the "Holy War," if he had not himself felt all the attacks which the Town of Mansoul knew, and heard the beating of the hell-drum in his own ears, just as the Mansoulians did, whose tale he tells. Masters of divinity are not to be made by shallow experience. We make not sailors on dry land, nor veterans in times of peace. Christ's rugged warriors who shall do great exploits for him, must be like the Spartan youths, they must be brought up by a Spartan training, and flogged, and made to bear the yoke in their youth, that afterwards they may be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness and to achieve great victories. This that looketh so cruel in Christ is only masked mercy. He putteth the vizard on his face, and looketh like an enemy, but a friendly heart is there still towards his chosen.

Let us remember, then, if we are to-day guilty and moaning our guiltiness—we ought not to forget that Christ is a brother though he seems to be an enemy, that he loves us with a pure and perfect love though he speaks hardly to us. If he do not answer our prayers he still intends to do it; if no pity or compassion are expressed, yet beyond a doubt he is not flinty of soul, nor is he hard to be moved to commiserate his children.

III. I now come to the last point, and here may God be pleased to let light break in upon darkened souls. JOSEPH AFTERWARDS REVEALED HIMSELF TO HIS BRETHREN, AND SO THE LORD JESUS DOES IN DUE TIME SWEETLY REVEAL HIMSELF TO POOR CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN PENITENT SINNERS.

The reading of the chapter which we heard this morning, is enough to bring tears to all eyes that are connected with tender hearts. I must acknowledge that when reading the chapter in my own study, I could not resist weeping copiously at the picture which the Holy Ghost has so admirably drawn. Those ten poor trembling brothers, Judah's speech just finished, and all of them on their knees supplicating the clearing of the court house, and then Joseph, whose soul was swelling with such grief and love, bursting out with that "I am Joseph." What a scene for tender souls! Though he must have spoken in deep affection, yet, "I am Joseph," must have fallen on their ears like thunder. "*Joseph!*" where are we now? Better for us that we were in a lion's den, than here with him whom we mocked, saying, 'Behold, this dreamer cometh, with him whom we sold, and dipped his coat of many colours in blood,

and then took it to his father, saying, 'See whether this be thy son's coat or no.'" Well might they tremble! And then look at the tenderness of Joseph when he says to them again, while they are retiring from him afraid, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt, I pray you come near to me." You hear his pathetic speech as he discovers his brotherhood and relationship, and then you see that generous embrace when, beginning with Benjamin, his next of kin, his own uterine brother, he afterwards weeps with all the rest, and sends them home with favours, enriched and happy. Dear friends, I say this is but a picture of what Christ does to some of us, and of what he is prepared to do to others of you who are trembling at his feet. Notice that this discovery was made *secretly*. Christ does not show himself to sinners in a crowd; every man must see the love of Christ for himself; we go to hell in bundles, but we go to heaven one by one. Each man must personally know in his own heart his own guilt; and privately and secretly, where no other heart can join with him, he must hear words of love from Christ. "Go and sin no more." "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee."

Mark, that as this was done in secret, the first thing Joseph showed them was *his name*. "I am Joseph." Blessed is that day to the sinner when Christ says to him, "I am Jesus, I am the Saviour;" when the soul discerns instead of the lawgiver, the Redeemer; when it looks to the wounds which its own sin has made, and sees the ransom-price flowing in drops of gore; looks to the head its own iniquity had crowned with thorns, and sees beaming there a crown of glory provided for the sinner. Sinner, poor troubled sinner, Jesus speaks to thee this morning, from his very cross where he bled for thee, he says, "I am Jesus, look to me, trust me and be saved, repose thy confidence wholly upon me, I will wash thee from thy sin, carry thee safely through time, and land thee gloroiusly in eternity."

Having revealed his name, the next thing he did was to reveal his relationship; "I am Joseph, *your brother*." Oh, blessed is that heart which sees Jesus to be its brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, the son of Mary as well as the Son of God. Sinner, whom the Holy Ghost hath awakened, Christ is thy brother, he feels for you, he has a fellow-sympathy with you in the present pangs that wring your heart. He loves you, he loved you before you knew anything of him, he has given you the best proof of that love in that he has redeemed you with his blood. And revealing his relationship, he also displays *his affection*. "Does my father yet live?" As a brother does he remember the head of the household. Jesus tells you that the brotherhood between his soul and yours is not fanciful or metaphorical, but lets his heart go out to you. Penitent

sinner, can you believe it? Jesus loves you—loves you though you hated him. Poor awakened sinner, dost thou think it possible? It *is*. It is not only possible, but certain. He who is heaven's Lord, before whom the angels bow, loves thee. I remember one man who was converted to God, who told me that the means of his conversion was hearing a hymn read one Sabbath morning in the congregation, when we were worshipping in Exeter Hall, and that hymn was this—"Jesus, *lover of my soul;*" and just those words struck him. "Does he love my soul? Oh!" said he, "nothing had ever broken me before, but the thought that Jesus loved me was too much for me. I could not help giving my heart to him." The old school-men used to teach that it was impossible for any man to know that another loved him without returning the love in some degree. And surely, sinner, though thou feelest thyself to be the vilest wretch on earth, when we tell thee that it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief," this should be a reason why thy heart should go out to him. He loves thee, oh quickened, convinced sinner. Oh, trust him, and taste that love in thine own heart.

And then will you please to notice, that having thus proved his affection, he gave them *an invitation to approach*. "Come near to me, I pray you." You are getting away in the corner. You want to hide away in the chamber alone; you do not want to tell anybody about your sorrow. Jesus says, "Come near to me, I pray you. Do not hold your griefs away from me. Tell me what it is you want. Confess to me your guilt; ask me for pardon, if you want it. Come near to me, do not be afraid. I could not smite with a hand that bought you; I could not spurn you with the foot that was nailed for you to the tree. Come to me!" Ah! this is the hardest work in the world, to get a sinner to come near to Christ. I thought myself that he was such a hard, hard Christ, and that he wanted me to do so much before I might come to him. When I heard that gracious message, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth;" my heart ventured to look, and oh! joy of joys, the burden rolled away, the sin was blotted out, my soul stood accepted in Christ. "Come near to me I pray thee." Oh that I knew where a broken heart was this morning! I think I would point him out, and look him in the face, and say in Jesu's name, "Poor sinner, come near to me, I pray thee." Oh, wherefore do you stay when Jesus invites? Wherefore do you tarry in your despair when Jesus bids you come to him? Shall the prisoner hug his chains? Shall the captive cleave to his dungeon? Arise! be free! arise, he calleth thee—sinner, come near to Jesus. Salvation is in him, and, as he bids thee, take it.

I want you to notice again, having given the invitation, what *conse-*

lation Joseph gave! He did not say, "I am not angry with you; I forgive you:" he said something sweeter than that—"Be not angry *with yourselves*," as much as to say, "As for me, ye need not question about that: be not grieved nor angry with *yourselves*." So my blessed, my adorable Master, says to a poor, cast down, dejected sinner—"As for my forgiving you, that is done. My heart is made of tenderness, my bowels melt with love; forgive yourself; be not grieved nor angry with yourself: it is true you have sinned, but I have died; it is true you have destroyed yourself, but I have saved you. Weep no more; dry those eyes and sing aloud—

'I will praise thee every day,
Now thine anger's turned away:
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.

Jesus has become at length
My Salvation and my strength;
And his praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.'"

Dear friends, last of all, having thus given them the consolation, he gave a quietus for their understanding in *an explanation*. He says, "It was not you, it was God that sent me hither." So doth Christ say to the poor soul that feels itself guilty of the Lord's crucifixion. "It was not you," says he, "it was God that sent me to preserve your lives with a great deliverance. Man was the second agent in Christ's death, but God was the great first worker, for he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, man did it to destroy righteousness, but God did it to save even the ungodly. Man hath the crime, but God hath the triumphing; man rules, but God overrules. The gall hath become honey, out of the eater hath come forth sweetness. Death is destroyed by Jesus' death; hell upturned by hell's blackest deed. Sinner, Christ died to save thee with a great deliverance, what sayest thou? Art thou willing to come to him? if so, he made thee willing. Dost thou say, "But what is to come?"—to come to Christ is to trust him. Are you willing to renounce yourself and your sin and trust Christ, and take him to have and to hold, for better for worse, through life and through death, in time and in eternity? Doth thy heart say "Yes." Wilt thou come to this man? Shall there be a match made of it this morning? Shall your heart be affianced and married into Christ? Ah! then, put this ring of promise on thy finger and go away affianced unto Christ, and this is the ring, "Though thy sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson they shall

be whiter than snow." I feel this morning as though my Master had given me such a sweet message that I cannot tell it as I would, but it may be that there is some soul here that is like a little flower which has opened its cup to catch the dew drop, and it will be good for such a soul. It may be there is a heart here that has been in darkness, and though it be but a candle I can bring, yet that light shall be pleasant to its poor eyes so long used to this horrid gloom.

Oh! that some heart here would trust the Lord Jesus. Is there none? Must we go back, and say in the closet, "Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Surely, there is one. Perhaps it is a stranger here, of whom I shall never hear again in this world. Well, but the Lord shall hear of it, and he shall have the praise. Perhaps it is one that has long sat in this house of prayer, invulnerable up till now. Perhaps the arrow has found a joint in the harness. O soul! by him that stretches out his arms of love to thee, and by the grace that moves thee now to run into those arms, come to him. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves." It was God that put Christ to death, that he might save you with a great deliverance. Trust Jesus, and you are saved, and you shall give him praise, world without end. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AN EXHORTATION BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AND

A SALUTATION BY REV. MERLE D'AUBIGNE, OF GENEVA.

DELIVERED IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 18TH, 1862.

"And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem."—2 Samuel, xi. 1.

THE last sentence informs us of a circumstance so significant that the Holy Spirit has recorded it twice. In the parallel passage in the Chronicles, you will find a repetition of the statement that "David tarried at Jerusalem." It had hitherto been his custom to march at the head of his troops. The king of Israel was the commander-in-chief of the Lord's hosts, and by personal deeds of prowess excited the national spirit; but on this occasion, you perceive, he delegates his power to Joab, and seeks inglorious ease. We are informed that the season had arrived when kings go forth to battle—probably the spring, when horses could be maintained by forage, and when, if a long siege should be necessary, the armies might sit down before a city with the prospect of advancing summer and ripening harvests. It was a great occasion; for otherwise, how is it that he sent all Israel with Joab? A great war had been provoked, and most important interests were at stake. This makes it the less excusable on the part of the king, that he should, when his presence was especially necessary, absent himself from his proper post. Nor do we think that state affairs needed his presence in Jerusalem. No rebellions were hatching; the whole land was quiet, and all the tribes voluntarily submitted themselves to his sway. It does not seem from the context, that David was at all occupied with state cares; for you find that he rises from his bed at eventide. Contrary to the hardier custom to which he had inured himself in his earlier days, after his noontide meal he laid himself down and slept till the sun was setting; and when he arose, it was not to succour the poor, or to dispense justice, but to take a stroll on the housetop; and there, being idle, having put his armour off, the arrow smote him; having nothing good to do, the enemy found him awful work; for the tempter planted straight before his eyes a fair temptation, into which he rushed as a bird to the snare, or as a bullock to the slaughter. Happy would it have been for king David had he been in battle; he would not then have known this temptation. Probably if the temptation had presented itself, he would have been so occupied with martial cares that he would

not have fallen a victim. Idleness was the mother of the mischief, and if you trace to its bottom the foul iniquity that has made the name of David a special mark for all the Lord's enemies, you will find it had much to do with his not going out to battle when the country required it, when the season commanded it, and when no affairs of state justified his absence.

You will readily perceive the subject of my address. First, *to the individual Christian;* and secondly, *to the Church*, as God shall help me, I will utter warnings against that deadly lethargy which is so apt to steal over us, putting us into a position to be readily assailable by temptation, ay, and to be easily overcome by it too.

I. To you, BROTHER IN CHRIST, I SPEAK PERSONALLY.

1. Let me direct your special attention to the season at which this temptation to idleness came upon David. Brethren, David never refused to go forth to battle while he was harassed by his adversary Saul. So long as he is hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, David's character is spotless, and his zeal is unrivalled. In his religion there was an intensity of energy, so long as in his life there was an intensity of adversity; but now an hour of trial is at hand, Saul is dead, and the last of his race sits as a humble pensioner at David's table. The son of Jesse is no more obliged to frequent the tracks of the wild goats, or to hide himself among the glooms of Engedi; his great adversary has long ago fallen by the arrows of the Philistines upon the mountains of Gilboa; but a stealthier foe is lurking in ambuscade,—woe to thee, David, if he overcome thee! Ah! Christian, and it is a dangerous time to you when temptation has ceased to harass you, when Satan has left you in peace, and when you have placed your foot on your adversary's neck; when the storm has hushed itself to sleep, when a dead calm takes the place of the awful hurricane; it is then you have need to look well to it, for then your soul may lose its former strength and watchfulness, and you may decline into indifference, and Laodicean lukewarmness. While the devil assails you on the right hand and on the left, you will hardly be able to rest upon the couch of carnal security. The dog of hell, by barking in your ears, keeps you awake; but when he shall cease his howlings, your eyelids will grow heavy, unless grace prevent. When you are no more driven to your knees by furious assaults from hell, you may experience the still more terrible trials of the enchanted ground, and you will have good cause to cry out, "Lord, let me not sleep as do others, but let me watch and be sober."

Yet again, David at this time had obtained the crown, and it was sitting softly and securely upon his head. Dear friends, far from depreciating the full assurance of faith, we know that it is our strength and our joy; but there is a temptation connected with it. The Christian is apt to say, "Now I am saved, I have no doubt about it; for the crown of my salvation encircles my head right royally." Believer, be on thy watchtower, for the next temptation will be, "Soul, take thine ease; the work is done; thou *hast* attained; now fold thine arms; sit thou still; all will end well; why needest thou too much to vex thyself?" Take care of the seasons when you have no doubts. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "I said, I shall never

be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Bless God for full assurance; but, remember, nothing but careful walking can preserve it. Full assurance is a priceless pearl; but when a man has a precious jewel, and he walks the streets, he ought to be much afraid of pickpockets. When the Christian has full assurance, let him be sure that all the devils in hell will try to rob him of it. Let him be more upon his watchtower than he was before. This is the temptation of assured believers, to sit down upon the throne and say, "I shall sit in my glory for ever and see no sorrow; I need no more go forth to fight the Lord's battles."

Yet further: it appears that at this time David was at the height of his prosperity. He had attained to about fifty years of age; the year of his jubilee was come, and everything went on jubilantly. Whithersoever he turned his hand, he prospered. "Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph." He could boast himself exceedingly, for God was with him in all his ways. Ah! dear friends, and when a Christian prospers, it is an ill time for him, unless he be on his watchtower. "In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us." When a man is poor, when he is sick, when he is tried in his estate, he has need of grace; but when he is rich, when his business succeeds, and his family are in good health, and all is well, he has need of grace upon grace. It is hard standing in high places; the brain grows dizzy with looking down. It is not easy to carry a full cup with a steady hand. Smooth places are slippery places. Let us beware, lest when we get full, Jeshurun waxes fat and kicks against the Lord. Summer weather breeds flies; fair weather in the soul brings out the evils and mischiefs of our nature. Heat hatches the cockatrice eggs, and the heat of prosperity often brings out the young serpents of sin. See to it, lest like David you refuse to go forth to battle because you are prospering in the world.

To complete the hazard, David had now the opportunity of indulging himself in all the luxuries of life. He had a palace with all the accompaniments of oriental magnificence. He was no more the humble shepherd eating a crust from his wallet,—no more the chieftain of an outlawed clan, depending upon such churlish husbandmen as Nabal for temporary assistance. The fat of the land was his; the oil of Asher, the vintage of Ephraim, the corn of Judah, and the dainties brought from afar, from Tyre and Sidon—all were his; he could be clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day: then it was that his soul grew lean, while the flesh was pampered. Fat steeds sometimes will not work; birds too well fed refuse to sing; and so does it happen when the riches of the earth are ours freely to enjoy, and the blessings of Divine Providence are poured out of the cornucopia of divine munificence, that we refuse to do the Lord's work, and, like David, go not out to battle.

Dear friends, I *know* that my sermon is pertinent to some of you. I would that I could pourtray the individuals so clearly that they could not allot to others the rebuke intended for themselves. It is a well known fact that when some people get rich in gold they grow poor in

grace. They rise in the eyes of the world and sink in the esteem of their heavenly Lord. Things which believers were glad to undertake when they were little in Israel, they cannot look upon when they have grown great among the inhabitants of Zion. Certain folks, when they can keep a carriage, are ashamed to frequent the meeting-house; they must go to some more respectable place of worship. The truth was respectable enough for them when they loved it; but now they love the honour of men more than Christ; they can hoodwink their consciences and unite with worldly Churches, who love architecture, scholarship, and pomp, more than truth and holiness. "God grant," said one of Wesley's followers, "that the Methodists may never grow rich;" and I think I might well say, God grant the Baptists never may. O Lord, give them neither poverty nor riches, but especially let them not grow too respectable to associate with the poor of the land! Why, there are some of you who, when you joined this Church, were as earnest as you could be; and where are you now? There are some that were prominent in the prayer meeting; how often do we see them now? Are there not many among us as miserly towards the Lord's cause as if they did not care a rush for it? You will say I am personal. Brethren, I mean to be, and want to be; and if you feel that this is your case, instead of being offended at the honest rebuke now offered to you, solemnly thank God that it comes home to you; earnestly retrace your steps, be no more sluggish and sleepy, but for the sake of him who loves you with an everlasting love, once more cast your souls into his cause, and go forth to fight your Lord's battles. Away with your downy dozings and comfortable slumbers. Lord, arouse us by a thunderbolt from heaven! When Christians have learned the doctrine and begin to forget the practice; when they have a little smattering of experience, and think they are *the* men, and wisdom shall die with them; when they despise the broken-hearted and timid; there is but a step between them and a fall. Oh! you who are in such a condition, I solemnly warn you. I sound this day an alarm in Zion. Arise ye! arise ye! ye slumberers upon your soft couches; for if ye slumber now, ye shall one day awake and find yourselves upon the verge of destruction, and only the sovereign grace of God shall bring you back as David was brought back, and restore you once again to the right way, to journey with broken bones to your tomb, sorrowing because of your sin.

2. Observe, my brethren, that there are certain tendencies abroad which will co-operate with the dangers of the occasion, and unless the Christian be very watchful, will lead him into David's vice of slothfulness. Brethren, what would the flesh do with some of us, but make us, if we would let it have its way, as idle as Solomon's sluggard? I do confess, there is, perhaps, no man living that has a stronger temptation to sheer idleness than myself, although I am no boaster when I say I labour as hard as any man in either hemisphere. Alas! for this body of sin and death, it is hard for a man to serve the Lord aright while imprisoned in it. Brethren, you will find that not only the mere flesh, but the lustings of the mind will naturally lead you to be cold in Christ's work. Enthusiasm is not the tendency of Englishmen in matters of religion; only the Spirit of God can give the tongue of fire, and the

rushing mighty wind to the assembled disciples. The flesh lusteth continually towards inaction; the inertia of matter reaches its height in the corruption of humanity. We lift up our souls unto God, but we fall down again to the earth, for our nature has in it more of the sinking of a millstone than the mounting of an eagle. Well does Watts put it—

> "Look, how we grovel here below, fond of these trifling toys;
> Our souls can neither fly nor go to reach eternal joys."

Brethren, your unmortified flesh will make you idle enough, without any other tempter.

Then there is the devil; he will take care to sing your lullaby and rock your cradle if you want to sleep, for he loves not to see God's warriors on the alert. While they are all asleep, he knows the war will not go on very briskly. An army dosed with chloroform would be quite as useless as if they were chained and manacled. While swords sleep in scabbards, no foe needs dread them. Ah, my fellow-soldiers, this is a great artifice of Satan, and one of his craftiest devices to lull us all into a deep sleep.

Besides, you will find the world has a great tendency to make you cold and dead. What do you feel, brethren, after some few hours of intermeddling with business? Is not this vain world a foe to grace? Unless you are very spiritually minded, do you not find that the world has a down-dragging tendency? I ask the workers, the merchants, the thinkers, do you not find that secular occupations, unless you are exceedingly careful in consecrating them to God, have a tendency to stain the garments of your priesthood and bring you down from your high standing? The world is to the Christian an ice house, and he a tender plant that has been the gardener's special care. I would give nothing for that Christian who loves to be in worldly company; I think if any man can find himself quite at home with ungodly persons, he must be one of them; and if even with merely moral persons he can find a settled rest, surely there can be nothing of the high and aspiring nature within him that belongs to the true-born heir of heaven.

But, brethren, I am sorry to have to add one more thing; even association with some portions of the Church of God, in its present state, may cool the ardour of piety. Ecclesiastical lethargy is perhaps one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to young believers. I am not staggered by the world's indifference to religion, for I can understand it, but the indifference of the Church to the progress of Jesus' kingdom is an enigma which one cannot solve, and many a young enthusiastic Christian has had the noble spirit of Christ all but crushed out of him, by seeing the dulness and deadness of older saints, who seemed to be pillars in the temple of God. Oh! have we not heard our young Davids saying concerning our foes, "Who is this Philistine? I will go against him and smite off his head;" but a veteran Eliab in the Church has said, "Because of the pride and the naughtiness of thine heart to see the battle art thou come." When he is brought before a Saul-like minister, he says, "Well, young man, you are enthusiastic, you must not attempt to do the Lord's work by simple faith, you must put this helmet on and carry this spear, you must wear these greaves of brass;" and the

poor young man, with almost enthusiasm enough in him to melt the armour off his back, has to go out to sure defeat, wearing untried weapons which prove his ruin. Oh! give us back the glorious days when the Church was a pillar of fire, and when every new member was a new coal added to the glowing mass. Give us back even the stakes of Smithfield, if we might have the fiery energy of the first reformers; visit us anew with persecution, if we can but renew the diligent prosecution of the ends and aims of the Church of Christ; let our foes grow angry if *we* may but grow zealous.

3. To pass on rapidly to the third point. What happened through David's tarrying at home? Some men think it a small thing to be doing nothing for Christ; it is a great thing, and will be a damnable thing, unless God give you repentance. What happened, I say, to David? Why, now that he was tarrying at home and giving himself up to sloth, he was losing his usefulness and honour by no more fighting the Lord's battles; no more triumphs were being written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah; and even Joab had to send for him to come in at the end of the fray to take the city, lest it should be called by Joab's name. Is it a little thing for a follower of Christ to be losing the immortal honour of serving the Lord? What will not men do to win fame? and shall we, when it lies at our doors, turn aside to our beds of ease, and cast our glory to the ground? Let us be up and doing, for it is no light thing to be losing the honour of a faithful servant of Christ.

David lost his communion and joy. A man cannot be idle and yet have Christ's sweet company. Christ is a quick walker, and when his people would talk with him they must travel quickly too, or else they will soon lose his company. Christ, my Master, *goes about doing good*, and if you would walk with him you must go about upon the same mission. The Almighty lover of the souls of men is not wont to keep company with idle persons. I find in Scripture that most of the great appearances that were made to eminent saints were made when they were busy. Moses kept his father's flock when he saw the burning bush; Joshua is going round about the city of Jericho when he meets the angel of the Lord; Jacob is in prayer and the angel of God appears to him; Gideon is threshing, and Elisha is ploughing, when the Lord calls them; Matthew is in the receipt of custom when he is bidden to follow Jesus; and James and John are fishing. The manna which the children of Israel kept till morning bred worms and stank: idle grace would soon become active corruption.

Moreover, sloth hardens the conscience: laziness is one of the irons with which the heart is seared. Abimelech hired vain and light persons to serve his turn, and the prince of darkness does the same. Oh! friends, it is a sad thing to rust the edge off from one's mind, and to lose keenness of moral perception; but sloth will surely do this for us. David felt the emasculating power of sloth, he was losing the force of his conscience, and was ready for anything. The worst is near at hand. He walks upon the housetop and sees the object which excites his lust; he sends for the woman, the deed is done; it leads to another crime, he tempts Uriah; it leads to murder, Uriah is put to death; and

he takes Uriah's wife. Ah, David! Ah, David! how are the mighty fallen! how is the prince of Israel fallen and become like the lewd fellows who riot in the evening! From this day forth his sunshine turns to cloud, his peace gives place to suffering, and he goes to his grave an afflicted and troubled man, who, though he could say, "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant," yet had to precede it with that very significant sentence, "Although my house be not so with God." Dear friends, is there any one here among the Lord's people who would crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame? Is there any one among you that would wish to sell your Master, with Judas, or turn aside from Christ, with Demas? It is easy of accomplishment. Oh, you say, you could not do it. *Now*, perhaps you could not. Get slothful; do not fight the Lord's battles, and it will become not only easy for you to sin, but you will surely become its victim. Oh! how Satan delights to make God's people fall into sin; for then he doth, as it were, thrust another nail into the bloody hand of Christ; then he doth stain the fair white linen of Christ's own garment; then he vaunteth himself that he hath gotten a victory over the Lord Jesus, and hath led one of the Master's favourites captive at his will! Oh! if we would not thus make hell ring with Satanic laughter, and make the men of God weep because the cedars of Lebanon are cut down, let us watch unto prayer, and be diligent in our Master's business, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

My dear friends, we do not exhort you to serve Christ, to be saved by it. David *was* saved. I only speak to you who are saved, and I beg and beseech of you to take notice of David's fall, and of the sloth that was at the beginning of it, as a warning to yourselves. Some temptations come to the industrious, but *all* temptations attack the idle. Notice the invention used by country people to catch wasps. They will put a little sweet liquor into a long and narrow-necked phial. The do-nothing wasp comes by, smells the sweet liquor, plunges in, and is drowned. But the bee comes by, and if she does stop for a moment to smell, yet she enters not, because she has honey of her own to make; she is too busy in the work of the commonwealth to indulge herself with the tempting sweets. Master Greenham, a Puritan divine, was once waited upon by a woman who was greatly tempted. Upon making enquiries into her way of life, he found she had little to do, and Greenham said, "That is the secret of your being so much tempted. Sister, if you are very busy, Satan may tempt you, but he will not easily prevail, and he will soon give up the attempt." Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil so much as they do tempt the devil to tempt them. Idleness sets the door of the heart ajar, and asks Satan to come in; but if we are occupied from morning till night, if Satan shall get in, he must break through the door. Under sovereign grace, and next to faith, there is no better shield against temptation than being "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." And, dear friends, let me remind those of you who are doing little for Christ, that once you were not so cold as this. There was a time with David when the sound of the clarion of war would have stirred his blood, and he would have been eager for the fray. There was a day when the very sight of Israel marshalled

in goodly phalanx would have made David bold as a lion. Oh! it is an ill thing to see the lion changed like this! God's hero stays at home with the women! There was a time when you would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon, and never minded standing in the aisles; but now the sermons are tedious to some of you, although you have soft cushions to sit upon. Then if there was a cottage-meeting, or a street-preaching, you were there. Ah! you say, that was wildfire. Blessed wildfire! The Lord give you the wildfire back again; for even if it be wildfire, better wildfire than no fire at all—better be called a fanatic than deserve to be called a drone in Christ's hive.

Those of you who do very little for your Master,—and there are a few such in this Church, who grudge to give of their substance,—let me say to you, Are you not ashamed to see how the Lord's other servants serve him? When Uriah said to David, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing," methinks the king must have felt very uneasy in his luxurious sloth. What say you to this, some of you? You, who were once the chief of sinners, are now saved by grace; *you* have had high privileges, great tastes of love, near fellowship with him,—you are his own elect, anointed, taken up from the dunghill and made to sit among princes, and yet you are doing next to nothing for Christ. Oh! dear friends, I would not so much conjure you to think over these things, as beseech the Holy Spirit to lay these matters to your hearts, that you may not sleep any longer, but being of the day, may do the day's work, till the day shall end!

II. I shall occupy but a few minutes more, while I endeavour to speak of the text as it refers to THE WHOLE CHURCH; for I think it has a loud voice to the whole of us as a community. Strangers and members of other Churches must kindly forget that they are here. I am not about to speak to them, but I am about to speak to *you*,—the two thousand members of this Church under my care, to whom I am bound most of all to speak personally and faithfully.

My dear friends, it does seem to me that to us as a Church the temptation to sloth is very likely to come, for we are very much in the same condition as David. Our enemies do not anything like so much harass us as once they did. When the Parliament is over, we shall have certain newspapers abusing us again, for when they have nothing else to say, they fill up with abusing us. But there was a time when we had no friends. We look back some eight years ago, when the Church of Christ was very shy of us: we were innovators, preaching in those wicked music halls; it was such a very awful thing to preach the gospel where people would come to hear it. It was going contrary to the customs of the Christian Church to carry the gospel to poor sinners; and good people, holy people, and godly people thought we were sinners above all sinners on earth; and if an accident did occur, if the tower of Siloam fell, how plainly were we told that we deserved the catastrophe. Then there were sneers everywhere, caricatures, jeers, jibes of all sorts, and you all had to suffer each your share with your leader. To a

great extent that is over. The clergy of the Church of England do now what it was once infamous for us to do. Now the theatre hears the voice of Christ; now the cathedrals echo with the holy hymn—blessed be God for all this! We enjoy a degree of peacefulness, and have not now all the world against us, as once we had. Now we shall be apt to fold our arms and say, Let us subside into the easy respectability of other congregations, and let it be well with us.

During all the time God has been pleased to favour us with profound peace in the Church. We have been disturbed by no word of ill-doctrine, by no uprising of heretics in our midst, or any separations or divisions. This is a blessed thing: but still Satan may make it a dangerous matter. We may begin to think that there is no need for us to watch, that we shall always be as we are; and deacons, and elders, and pastor, and Church members, may all cease their vigilance, and then the root of bitterness may spring up in the neglected corner till it gets too deeply rooted for us to tear it up again.

We have accomplished, as a Church, the great work which we set for ourselves—the building of this house of prayer. And now we come to our place in our loved house of prayer, and feel the Master's presence with us. But without a grand object before our eyes imperatively demanding self-sacrifice from each one of us, as this object did, without some enterprise which we can all lay hold of and feel that we could give our last shilling to carry it out successfully, we are apt to grow rusty, to lean upon our weapons instead of using them, and to withdraw from the Lord's host instead of rushing on to battle with the shout of men who mean to win the victory. Ah! give us back again all the noise, and the confusion, and the strife; let us have once more the coldness, and the harshness, and evil speaking of the entire Church of God, if we may but have our early enthusiasm and earnestness for Christ. Our work of educating men for the ministry may supply the object for our zeal; may the Lord give zeal for the object!

Dear friends, let me say solemnly, there are many tendencies to make this Church sleep. We come frequently into contact with professed believers who will throw cold water upon every effort—who think doing anything for Christ a work of supererogation, and there is a tendency in us to go with them, and to say, "Let it be so; let us be quiet." It is almost necessary for the Church that, at least once in a hundred years, there should arise in it some new body of enthusiasts; for the old Churches, though noble at the start, like all human things, flag ere long. Why, Methodism, though still most powerful, has nothing like the fire it had in Wesley's and Whitfield's time. It is now no more like a great volcano sending up torrents of holy fire to heaven in prayer, and sending down streams of all-consuming lava into the plains of sin. It has grown respectable, and learned, and fine. So with each of the Churches. Do they not all degenerate? No matter whether it is England, America, France, Switzerland—wherever it may be, there is a down-drawing tendency constantly at work; and unless God the Holy Ghost come in with irresistible might, *we* shall as a Church succumb to general lethargy, and yield ourselves to apathy.

What shall we do, as a Church, then? Let us take heed to our foot-

steps, every one of us, and be doubly careful: let us meet together in greater numbers for prayer; let each man feel more and more his individual responsibility to Christ; let us weigh the awful necessities of this huge city; let us put out every energy, and use every agency that can possibly be employed for the regeneration of this dark, dark land. If we grow idle; if the Church of Christ universally shall grow idle, we cannot expect that our enemies will be idle too. Once the Light said to the Darkness, "I am growing weary with shooting my arrows every morning at thee, O Darkness! I am weary with pursuing thee around the globe continually. I will retire if thou wilt." But the Darkness said, "Nay, it is of necessity that if thou yieldest thy dominion I shall take it; there can be no truce between thee and me."

Friends, I might address the members of this Church as it is said an old Scotch Commander once addressed his soldiers when he saw the enemy coming. This was his brief, terse speech: "Lads," said he, "there they are, and if you dinna kill them they will kill you." Look, members of the Church; if you do not put down lethargy and sloth, if you strive not against Popery, Infidelity, and Sin, they will put you down. There is no other alternative; to conquer or to die; to live and to be glorious; or to fall ignobly. See, Jehovah lifts his banner before our eyes to-day! Rally ye, rally ye, rally ye, ye soldiers of the cross! The trumpet soundeth exceeding loud and long to-day; and the hell-drum on the other side soundeth too. Who dares to hesitate, let him be accursed. "Curse ye, Meroz, curse ye, Meroz," saith the Lord, "curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, if they come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty; "He that is not with me is against me; he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Out on you, ye indifferent ones! Know ye not ye are either on Christ's side or else ye are his adversaries. On! the charge comes: Forward, heroes of heaven! What shall become of those who are midway between the two armies? Over ye, over ye; troops shall trample on your bodies. Ye shall be the first to be cut in pieces, O ye indifferent ones! who are neither this nor that; and then shall come the shock, and then the charge; and as in that conflict you shall have no portion, so in that great triumph which shall surely follow, you shall have no share.

I will give way to my friend, Mr. D'Aubigne, who will address you for a few minutes, when I have simply reminded those who are not in Christ's army that with them there is something to come before service, "Except ye repent and be converted, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." The door to that kingdom is Christ; trust him and you are saved. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

My dear friend, Dr. D'Aubigne, is here this morning, having been called by the Bishop of London, according to the order of our beloved Queen, to preach in the Royal Chapel of St. James. In a kind note with which he favoured me last week, he expressed a desire publicly to shew his hearty fellowship with his brethren of the Free Churches of England, and I am delighted to welcome him in the Tabernacle this morning, in the name of this Church, and I may venture to add, in the name of all the *Free* Churches of England. May the Historian of the Reformation continue to be honoured of the Lord his God!

DR. MERLE D'AUBIGNE: I do not speak your tongue, my dear friends—I speak it very badly, but I will do what I can to make myself understood. When I heard your dear pastor reading to us the 16th chapter of the Romans, I remembered those words which we find very often in the Epistles of Paul—"Love to the saints," and "Faith in the Lord." In the 16th chapter we find a beautiful exhibition of the love to the saints, the children of God. We see it was written from the Church of Corinthus, in Greece, to the Church of Rome. Observe how many Christians that Church of Corinthus and the apostle knew at Rome! We have a long catalogue of names—Priscilla, Aquila, Andronicus, and others. I must confess, my dear friends, to my shame, that in this great assembly I know only two or three names. I know the name of our dear friend, Mr. Spurgeon; I know the name, but not the person, of Mr. North, upon my left, and I know the name of the friend who has received me in your great city, Mr. Kinnaird, "Gaius, my host," as the apostle says. But in this great assembly of six thousand men and women, and I hope brethren and sisters in Christ, I do not know another name. Well, my dear friends, I would ask you, do you know the names of many Christians in Geneva? You do not know perhaps three; perhaps two; perhaps one. Now, that is to me a demonstration that fraternity, or brotherly love, is not so intense in our time as it was in the time of the apostles. In the first century, for a man to give his name to the Lord was to expose himself to martyrdom; and Christians in that time formed only one household in the whole world, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Let us remember that, and may we, by the Holy Ghost, say that we who have been baptized with the blood and the Spirit of the Lord, have only one Father, one Saviour, one Spirit, one faith, and we are only one house, the house of the living God, the house of Christ, one house of the Holy Spirit in the whole world; not only in Europe, Asia, and Africa, but in America, in Australia, one house, one family. Oh, my dear brethren, let us grow in the love to the brethren!

Then there is another thing, faith; faith in the Lord Jesus. There can be no love to the saved and the redeemed, if there is no true living faith and hope in the Saviour and the Redeemer. Well, I suppose all of you in this great meeting would say, "We believe in the Lord, we have faith in him." Yes, but that faith must be sincere, must be living, must come from the heart. I will tell you one word from Rome. Probably all these friends sent some words to the apostle, but I will tell you one word that was said once in Rome, not at the time of Paul, but at the time of our blessed Reformation. There was in the latter part of the sixteenth century, a man in Italy, who was a child of God, taught by the Spirit. His name was Aonio Paleario. He had written a book called, "The Benefit of Christ's Death." That book was destroyed in Italy, and for three centuries it was not possible to find a copy; but two or three years ago, an Italian copy was found, I believe, in one of your libraries at Cambridge or Oxford, and it has been printed again. It is perhaps singular, but this man did not, as he ought to have done, leave the Romish Church. But his whole heart was given to Christ. He was brought before the judge in Rome by order of the Pope. The judge said, "We will put to him three questions; we will ask him what is the

first cause of salvation, then what is the second cause of salvation, then what is the third cause of salvation?" They thought that in putting these three questions, he would at last be made to say something which should be to the glory of the Church of Rome. They asked him, "What is the first cause of salvation?" and he answered, "*Christ.*" They then asked him, "What is the second cause of salvation?" and he answered, "CHRIST." And they asked him the third time, "What is the third cause of salvation?" and he answered, "CHRIST." They thought he would have said, first, Christ; secondly, the Word; thirdly, the Church; but no, he said, "Christ." The first cause, Christ; the second, Christ; the third, Christ; and for that confession which he made in Rome, he was condemned to be put to death as a martyr. My dear friends, let us think and speak like that man; let every one of us say, "The first cause of my salvation is Christ; the second is Christ; the third is Christ. Christ and his atoning blood, Christ and his powerful regenerating Spirit, Christ and his eternal electing grace, Christ is my only salvation, I know of nothing else."

Dear friends, we find in the epistle to the Romans these words: "The whole Church saluteth you." I have no official charge, but I may in a Christian and fraternal spirit say to you, the Genevese Church, the Church in Geneva saluteth you; and I would say, the whole Continental Church saluteth you, for we know you and we love you and the dear minister God has given you. Now we ask from you love towards us. We do what we can in that dark Continent to bring forward the light of Jesus Christ. In Geneva we have an Evangelical Society which has that work before it, and in other places we are also labouring; we ask for our work an interest in your prayers, for the work is hard among the Roman Catholics and the infidels of the Continent. But as our brother in the beginning of the service reminded you that from the little town of Geneva light came, by the grace of the Spirit, to many nations, and especially to England and Scotland, by the ministry of John Calvin, our Reformer; I may mention to you that upon the tri-centenary anniversary of the death of Calvin, which will take place in two years, on the 27th of May, 1864, we desire to erect in Geneva a monument to the blessed Reformation, and to the Reformer who has been the instrument of God in promoting the true doctrine, not only in Geneva, but in a great many countries, and I ask also your interest in that work, and in that spot which has been blessed since the 16th century, for Switzerland, for France, for the Netherlands, for Germany, for England, for Scotland, and is now blessed for the United States, and for the ends of the earth. I beg of you, dear friends, your deep interest and your earnest prayer for us. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHOICE PORTIONS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 25TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the Lord's portion is his people."—Deuteronomy xxxii. 9.

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."—Lamentations iii. 24.

THE love of God changes us into its own image, so that what the Lord saith concerning *us*, we also can declare concerning *him*. God is love essentially, and when this essential love shines forth freely upon us, we reflect it back upon him. He is like the sun, the great father of lights, and we are as the moon and the planets, we shine in rays borrowed from his brightness. He is the golden seal, and we, his people, are the wax receiving the impression. Our heaven is to be likeness to Christ, and our preparation for heaven consists in a growing imitation of him in all things. See, brethren, how the Lord gives the word, and our heart, like an echo, repeats every syllable. The Lord loveth his people, and we love him because he first loved us; he hath chosen his saints, and they also have made him their chosen heritage. The saints are precious to Jesus, and unto us who believe *he* is precious, Christ lived for us, and for us to live is Christ; we gain all things by his death, and for us to die is gain. The Church is the looking-glass in which Christ sees himself reflected; she is like a fair songstress taking up the refrain of Jesus' canticles of love, while he sings, "My sister, my spouse," she answers, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." It is most delightful to perceive how, through divine grace, believers come to have the same feeling towards their God which their gracious Lord has towards them. Our two texts present us with an interesting instance: the Church is God's portion, he delights in her, he finds in her his solace and his joy; but God is also, as the result of this, the Church's portion—her full delight and bliss. Beloved, the love is mutual. And whereas, the Lord is married to his people, we perceive that it is no forced match on either side; he voluntarily gave himself to her, and she joyfully surrenders her all to him. His whole heart he gave unto his chosen people, and now they as voluntarily, though led by divine grace, give themselves to him; and while he clasps his Church in his

arms, saying, "Thou art my portion," she returns the embrace, and rapturously cries, "Thou art my portion, O Lord."

As God shall help me, and relying only on his divine assistance, I shall try to work out these two texts at some length. We shall commence with "*The Lord's portion;*" we will then proceed to the second, "*His people's portion.*"

I. "THE LORD'S PORTION IS HIS PEOPLE."

1. The text teaches us that *the Church of God is the Lord's own peculiar and special property.* "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." By creation, as well as by providence, Jehovah is the liege Lord and Sovereign possessor of the entire universe. Let none venture to dispute his claims, or say that he is not the great owner of all things, for thus saith the Lord, "Behold, all souls are mine." But he has a special property in his Church. As a king may have ample possessions, to all of which he has undoubted right, but still he has royal demesnes and crown-lands which are in a very special sense his own; so hath the Lord of all a peculiar interest in his saints. As Osborne, and Balmoral, and Windsor belong to our sovereign by a tenure which differs from her title and claim to the United Kingdom, so the Church is the peculiar heritage of the King of kings. The whole world is God's by common right, he is Lord of the manor of the universe; but his Church is his garden, his cultivated and fenced field, and if he should give up his rights to all the rest of the wide earth, yet he never could relinquish his rights to his separated inheritance.

"The Lord's portion is his people." *How are they his?* We answer, first, by his own sovereign *choice.* Before they were fashioned, all creatures lay in his mind's eye in the mass of creatureship, and it was in his power to make whom he would as vessels unto honour. He did so ordain to make his chosen and set his love upon them. When they lay in the impure mass, having all fallen, it was still in his power, through the plan of redemption, to raise up some and to make these his own special heritage. This he did altogether apart from any goodness in them at the time, or any goodness which he foresaw in them. He had mercy on whom he would have mercy, and ordained a chosen company unto eternal life; these, therefore, are his by election. As our text says, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance, or as the Hebrew has it, "*the cord*" of his inheritance, in allusion to the old custom of measuring out lots by a line or cord; so by line and by lot the Lord has marked off his own chosen people, "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels."

They are not only his by choice, but by *purchase.* He has bought and paid for them to the utmost farthing, hence about his title there can be no dispute. Not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord's portion has been fully redeemed. There is no mortgage on his estate, no suits can be raised by opposing claimants, the price was paid in open court, and the Church is the Lord's freehold for ever. See the blood-mark upon all the chosen, invisible to human eye, but known to Christ, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his;" he forgetteth none of those whom

he has redeemed from among men, he counts the sheep for whom he laid down his life, and remembers well the Church for which he gave himself. Should any fraudulent adversary dispute his claim, he shews his pierced hands, and points to his wounded side; the emblems of his passion are the seals of his possession.

They are also his *by conquest.* Old Jacob, when he lay a-dying, gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, which he had taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. The Lord Jesus can truly say of his people that he hath taken them out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. Thy conquering hand, O Jesus, when nailed to the cross, rent away thy childrens' chains. Thou hast trodden our foes in thine anger, and trampled them in thy hot displeasure; behold their blood is sprinkled on thy garments, and thou hast stained all thy-raiment. Upon your necks, O ye tyrants of the Church, hath the Anointed put his feet; he hath dashed you in pieces with his own right hand! He hath broken the teeth of the young lions and delivered his Israel out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. He hath obtained his saints as a portion which he divideth with the great, and as a spoil which he has taken from the strong. We are Christ's this day by *conquest in us.* What a battle he had in us before we would be won! How long he laid siege to our hearts! how often he sent his terms of capitulation; but we rejected all overtures of submission; we barred our gates; we fenced our walls against him. The law, with its great battering ram, smote our gates till the posts rocked in their sockets, but we fortified our strongholds and fought stoutly against the Most High, vowing that we would not be subdued. But ah! do you not remember that glorious hour when he carried our hearts by storm, when he put his cross against the wall and scaled our ramparts, planting on our strongholds the blood-red flag of his atoning mercy? O brethren, we are indeed the conquered captives of his omnipotent love. Thus chosen, purchased, and subdued, the rights of our divine possessor are undeniable, and we, his people, are the regalia of his royalty, the gems of his crown, the sheep of his pasture, the children of his love, the darlings of his heart—if he could renounce all else which owns his sway, yet can he never give them up of whom it is written, "the Lord's portion is his people."

2. In the second place, the text shews that *the saints are the objects of the Lord's especial care.* "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth,"—with what object?—"to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." The wheels of providence are full of eyes; but in what direction are they gazing? Why, that all things may "work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." God is omnipresent and omniscient,—has an eye to all creatures and all things; he seeth all immensity; he beholdeth all things at one gaze. Yet, "the eyes of the Lord," in a special sense, "are upon the righteous;" and though his ears are open to all things, yet, in a peculiar manner, "his ears are open to their cry." It is true the Lord is the eternal watcher of the universe, and never sleeps; yet, in a very distinct sense, he is the guardian of his Church. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "Behold

he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He doth encompass all things by the word of his power, and he upholdeth all things by his might; but his power, his presence, and his protection, are more peculiarly with his Church, for he is to her "a wall of fire round about her, and a glory in her midst."

The Church, then, as God's portion, is his peculiar care. When she lay at first in her barrenness, as a corner of the waste howling wilderness, he took her under his care. He fenced and hedged her; he began to dig up by the roots her nettles, her thorns, her briers; he sent the spirit of burning into her, by which the weeds of evil were consumed; he ploughed her deep with convictions; he harrowed her with the law; he scattered into her the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. When he saw her tender blades springing up, he watched over every one of them; sending the dewdrops, and the rain showers, and the sunbeams, and the wind, just when they were needed; and he continues still to watch, even when her harvest groweth ripe, and the blade has given place to the full corn in the ear. He will watch until he himself, descending from the great white throne, shall take the golden sickle and reap the sheaves, and return to his eternal garner rejoicingly, bringing his sheaves with him.

Dear friends, it is sweet to reflect how careful God is of his Church. We are jealous of our eyes, but the Lord keeps his people as the apple of his eye. What a wonderful affection, *storgè*, as the naturalists call it, birds have for their young; they will sooner die than let their little ones be destroyed! But like as an eagle fluttereth over her nest so doth the Lord cover his people, and as birds flying so doth the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. What love a true husband has for his spouse! How much rather would he suffer than that she should grieve! And just such love hath God towards his Church. Oh, how he careth for her; how he provideth for her as a king should provide for his own queen! How he watcheth all her footsteps; guardeth all her motions; and hath her at all times beneath his eye, and protected by his hand. Hear how he tells of his care in providing for his Israel. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badger's skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful." Never was there care so tender, so perpetual, so faithful, so affectionate, as the care of God over all his chosen ones, for indeed it is no fiction, and no metaphor,—the Lord's portion really *is* his people. He covereth us with his feathers, and under his wings do we trust, his truth is become

our shield and buckler. The Lord is mighty in battle for his Church. He putteth out his omnipotence when he first of all delivers her, and not less might does he show every day when he keeps her from falling, that he may present her at last spotless before his face. Never was castle upon a mountain summit, fortified by nature and art, so impregnable as is the Church of God.

"Munitions of stupendous rock
Her dwelling place shall be;
There shall her sons without a shock
The wreck of nature see."

3. The text includes the idea that *the Church is the object of the Lord's special joy*, for a man's portion is that in which he takes delight. Brethren, how very strong the Scripture is as to the delight which God has in his saints. I am sure you and I cannot see anything in ourselves why the Lord should take pleasure in us; we cannot take delight in ourselves, for we often have to groan, being burdened, conscious of our sinfulness. I am afraid that God's people cannot take much delight in us, for they must perceive so much of our imperfections and our follies, that they must rather lament our infirmities than admire our graces. Oh! who would not rejoice in this transcendent truth, this glorious mystery; the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. I do not read anywhere that God delighteth in the cloud-capped mountains, or the sparkling stars, but I do read that he delighteth in the habitable parts of the earth, and that his delights are with the sons of men. I do not find it written that even angels give his soul delight, nor doth he say, concerning cherubim and seraphim, "I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters," but he does say that to the poor fallen race of man, debased, depraved, dejected by their sin, but saved, exalted, glorified by his grace. See what terms he uses; he calls them his *dwelling place*. "In Jewry is God known, his name is great in Israel, in Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion." "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation."

Where is a man most at ease? Why at home.

"Wherever we wander, there's no place like home."

Beloved, the Church is God's home; and as at home a man unbends himself, takes his pleasure, manifests himself to his children as he does not unto strangers, so in the Church, the Lord unbendeth himself, condescendingly manifesting himself to them as he doth not unto the world. O could you think of it, that the chosen of God are as dear to him as your humble cottage is to you, as the rooftree of your ancestors, and the place of your birth?

We are expressly told that the Church is the Lord's *rest*. "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell for I have desired it." As if all the world beside were his workshop, and his Church his rest. In the boundless universe he is busy marshalling the stars, riding upon the wings of the wind, making the clouds his chariot; but in his Church he is at rest, in Zion the Everlasting One spends his Sabbaths.

Yet further, there is an unrivalled picture in the word where the Lord

is even represented as *singing with joy over his people.* Who could have conceived of the Eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet it is written, "He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." As he looked upon the world, he spoke and said, "It is very good," but he did not sing. And as he vieweth the works of providence, I hear not that he sings; but when he gazes on you, and on me, the purchase of Jesus' blood, his own chosen ones, the great heart of the Infinite restrains itself no longer, but, wonder of wonders and miracle of miracles, God, the Eternal One, sings out of the joy of his soul. Truly "the Lord's portion is his people."

Once more, remember that the Lord represents himself as *married to his Church.* What does he say to her? "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. As a young man marrieth a virgin, even so shall thy God marry thee; and as a bridegroom rejoiceth over a bride, even so shall thy Lord rejoice over thee." He puts the affection, you see, in the most brilliant light. It is not only the affection of the husband to the wife, but seeing that some men are changeable, and their love grows cold, the Lord selects that hour of first love when the bridegroom, fresh and newly married, rejoices over his bride. The joy and love of the young honeymoon of married life is a but a faint picture of the complacency and delight God always has in his people.

Dear friends, this is a subject rather to be thought of than to be talked about, for I find thoughts rather in my heart this morning, than in my head, and I cannot get them out; but this I know, there cannot be a closer union between any two beings than there is between Christ and his people, for they are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. There cannot be a warmer love than this. A mother's love is nothing to it: yea, she may forget her sucking child, and cease to have compassion on the son of her womb; yet will I never forget thee, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. The husband may repulse from his arms the chosen one whom once he loved so tenderly, but "*He* hateth putting away." Whom once he hath embraced *he* embraces ever. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness." Oh that this love were shed abroad this morning in our poor frozen hearts! Oh that we felt God's delight in us! for if by faith we knew all this, and by sweet experience could attest it, surely we should be better prepared to join with Jeremiah in the second text, and say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."

4. Our text teaches us that God's people are *his everlasting possession.* You will say, "Why?" There is an allusion here to the division of the portions among the different tribes. That which was the portion of Asher never could be the portion of Zabulon, and that which belonged to Simeon never could belong to Dan; for there was a law made, that if any man should lose his inheritance by debt, or should be driven to the necessity of selling it, yet at the year of jubilee it always came back again to him; so that you see no Israelite ever lost his portion. Now, God maps out for himself his people. He says, "These are my

portion;" and think you, brethren, God will lose his portion? No: if he should sell his portion into the hand of the enemy for a season, yet at the year of jubilee it would return to him. Glory be to God, that year of jubilee is come! We were sold once; it did seem as if we were no more the people of God. But the high priest has died, the year of jubilee has been proclaimed, and now God's inheritance has come back to him; and if it could be alienated again, he would recover it. If a man be a child of God, and be suffered to fall, he shall certainly be brought back by bitter repentance before he dies, that his soul at the last may be saved, for God shall not lose his heritage. Have you not noticed, in reading Scripture, how the Israelites always clung tenaciously to their portion? When Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money:" Naboth said to him, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." And so, brethren, God will never sell his children at a price; nor if he could have better people instead, would he change them. They are his, and they shall be his while time lasts; and when time ends, and eternity rolls on, he never can, he never will cast away his chosen people. Let us in this rejoice and be exceeding glad. "The Lord's portion is his people."

II. We turn to our second text: "THE LORD IS MY PORTION, SAITH MY SOUL."

Dear friends, this sentence implies that true believers have the Lord as their *sole* portion. It is not, "The Lord is partly my portion," not "The Lord is *in* my portion;" but he himself makes up the sum total of my soul's inheritance. The Lord himself is my portion. Men of this world, we are told, have their portion in this life. In the field they have it in their abundant crops, and in the house they have it in comfort, in riches; some of them have it in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day; but how is it God gives them so good a portion here? You may have seen a farmer when he has his meal prepared for his swine, he passes two or three of his little children in the yard as he is going out at feeding-time. Why does he not give some of the meal to his children? He shoots it out till he has filled the hog's trough full, and then the swine come and eat till they lie down, full to bursting, their eyes standing out with fatness. How is it he does not give some of it to his children? "Oh, no," says he, "This is not the children's meat," and as it is not meet to take the children's bread and give it unto dogs, so it would not be meet to take the swine's meat and give it unto children. When Martin Luther had a large sum of money sent to him, he gave it all away directly to the poor, for he said, "O Lord, thou shalt never put me off with my portion in this life." Now when God's children receive anything in the way of gift from Providence they thank God for it, and endeavour to use it for his honour and glory, but they still insist upon it that this is not their portion. You know, when you go to a shop to buy goods, they give you the brown paper and the string into the bargain; so when we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things are added to us; for

godliness hath the promise of the life that is now, as well as of that which is to come. But we don't go to buy the brown paper and the string, they are not what we are looking after; so with the true Christian, his portion, that which he seeks after, is his God; this is his only portion, he seeks nothing besides. When Abraham had many children by his wife Keturah, you remember it is written he gave them their portions and sent them away; but he never did so with his Isaac. Lord, let me be thine Isaac; give the world its portion; give the emperor his crown; give the rich man his money bags, send him away; but let me be a stranger with thee as Isaac in his father's tent.

The man who has such a portion as this, ought not to wish for anything beyond. What can be needed beyond this portion? We are walking in the sunlight to-day—a fine glorious summer's day: if any one of you should be crying in your pew this morning, and I should ask, "What are you weeping for?" and you should reply, "I am weeping because I cannot see the stars," we should think you mad; for he that has the sunlight can do without the starlight: so with the believer. Why should he be weeping because he has lost this or lost that?

> "Thee, at all times, will I bless;
> Having THEE, I all possess;
> How can I bereaved be,
> Since I cannot part with THEE?"

St. Augustine was wont very often to pray, "Lord, give me thyself." A less portion than this would be unsatisfactory. Not God's grace merely, nor his love; all these come into the portion, but "*the Lord* is my portion, saith my soul." More than his attributes, more than his love, more than his covenant, is Jehovah himself the especial portion and privilege of his own beloved ones. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

As God is our only portion, so he is our *own* portion: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." I hope he is *your* portion, dear brethren; but whether he be or not does not concern me so much as whether he is *mine*. Come, brethren, have you got a personal grip of this portion? Are you sure it is yours? Pray for sinners; ask that God may bring them in, but see, first of all, to your own personal interest in these precious things. Let it go round these pews now. Can you say, "The Lord is MY portion?" Let it not be a general declaration, but a particular affirmation—"The Lord is MY portion." Yes, with streaming eyes and bursting heart, many a soul here that can now see Jesus hanging on the cross taking away all its guilt, can say, though almost choked with tears, "Yes, blessed be his name, the Lord *is* my portion." Some of you are very poor; you have nothing in the world, but you can say, "The Lord is my portion." Like the old woman who, when she had nothing to eat but a dry crust of bread, and only a cup of water to drink, broke the bread and said, "All this, and Jesus Christ too!" We have heard of a great man who once took a poor believer and said—"Do you look over there to those hills." "Yes, Sir." "Well, all that is mine; that farm yonder, and that yonder, and beyond that river over there—it is all mine." "Ah," said the other—"look at yonder little cottage,

that is where I live, and even that is not mine, for I have to hire it, and yet I am richer than you, for I can point up yonder and say—there lies my inheritance, in heaven's unmeasured space, and let you look as far as ever you can you cannot see the limit of my heritage, nor find out where it ends nor where it begins." Oh, what a blessing, brethren, it is if you and I can say "He is my heritage!" Do not, I beseech you, be satisfied with generals; come to particulars. I know people think they are going to heaven in the lump, but they never will. Men go to hell in bundles, but they go to heaven separately. "But we are a Christian nation." Nonsense about a Christian nation; we are as fairly an un-Christian nation as we are a Christian nation. "Oh, but we were all made Christians when we were sprinkled." You are not such fools as to believe this abominable superstition; you know better! How can a drop of water on the forehead change the heart or affect the nature, or floods of water either? You *know* better than that. Have you been born again from above? If you have not, you are not the children of God, and you have not a child's portion. Have you passed from death unto life? If not, you have not the portion of the living in Zion. You may, perhaps, have had your portion as the prodigal son did, who said "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me;" but unless you are converted, unless you have been brought to put your faith in Christ, you can never have that portion which belongs to the true-born heir of heaven, for to him God hath said—"Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

But again, the Lord is to his people an *inherited* portion. Many men have to thank God that their fathers were born before them, for they have worked, and made their money, and have left their estates. It is not every man who is rich that owes his riches to his industry, and certainly, if you and I be so rich as to have God for our inheritance, we owe it to the fact of our birth. How came I to be the child of God? I was born so—O no, you were born an heir of wrath. I know I was the first time, but the second time I was born in the image of his Son, begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You cannot earn this inheritance by working for it; you cannot purchase it; you can only gain it by inheriting it. Ask yourselves very solemnly whether you know anything of the new birth, and if you do not, as the Lord my God liveth, and as thy soul liveth, thou canst have no lot or portion in this matter until thou dost. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;" but if not children, then not heirs, and the heritage cannot be yours.

But further, brethren, this heritage is also ours *by choice*. We have chosen God to be our heritage. Believer, I ask you, supposing it could be left to you now whether you would have God to be your portion, or have the most splendid earthly destiny, which would you have? Oh! you would say, "Let me have my God." At first, I grant you, the will of man is not free to choose Christ, for man chooses evil and not good, and the Lord must choose our inheritance for us, or else we shall never choose it. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," was the word of Christ through the Apostle to all his people,

but if we are really called according to the purpose of electing love we can sing—

"Lov'd of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of him ere time began,
I choose him in return."

Better to have Christ and a fiery faggot, than to lose him and wear a royal robe. Better Christ and the old Mamertine dungeon of the Apostle Paul, than to be without Christ and live in the palace of Cæsar. Christ Jesus, thou blessed portion of our souls! thou art altogether lovely; and if we had to begin again, we would begin with thee.

Again, dear friends, God is his people's *settled* portion. When you were married, some of you, there were marriage settlements to be made, deeds to be drawn up, and lawyers called in, and witnesses to sign the marriage covenant. I suppose that when the Princess Alice gets her portion, it will be settled upon her in some way or other; for where there are great portions, there should be settlements. Blessed be the name of the Most High, there is a marriage settlement made upon all the Lord's people: their portion is settled on them. "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus," all the promises have been made to the chosen seed. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the covenant of grace shall not be removed. The covenant of day and night may be broken; the waters may again cover the earth, sooner than the decree of grace be frustrated. Every promise of the covenant is an entail to every heir of heaven. nor can Satan break the entail. No parliamentary act passed on earth; no deed perpetrated in the conclaves of hell, can ever affect the eternal, immutable, everlasting settlements of covenant grace which are made in Christ Jesus, ordered in all things and sure. The Lord is my settled portion.

The Lord is my *all-sufficient* portion. God fills himself; and as Manton says, in his exposition of the 119th Psalm, "If God is all-sufficient in himself, he must be all-sufficient for us;" and then he uses this figure—"That which fills an ocean will fill a bucket; that which will fill a gallon will fill a pint; those revenues that will defray an emperor's expenses, are enough for a beggar or a poor man; so when the Lord himself is satisfied with himself, and it is his happiness to enjoy himself, there needs no more, there is enough in God to satisfy." This is clear reasoning, brethren, and surely if the expenses of heaven's court never did affect the eternal exchequer of God's riches, all the expenses of our trial and affliction while we are here, never can diminish the unsearchable riches of God which are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But you will tell me that man's wishes are very large, and that it is hard to satisfy them. Ah! my brethren, I know it is—with anything here below. You may have heard, I dare say, of the gentleman who told his servant—"You have been a very faithful servant to me, John, and as you are getting old, I should like to give you a pension. Now, what do you think would satisfy you?" "Well, master," said he, "I think if I had fifty pounds a-year I should be very well satisfied indeed." "Well, think it over," said the master, "and come to me and let me

know." So the day comes. "Now, what do you want to satisfy you?" "Well, sir, as I said before, I should never want for anything, or wish for anything in this world, if I had fifty pounds a-year." "Well, John, it shall be done; there is the settlement for you: you shall have it." That man went out of the door, and said to a friend, "I wish I had said a hundred." So, you see, it is not easy to satisfy man. When he thinks he is satisfied, he still sees something beyond, the horse leech in his heart still cries, "Give, give." But God is a satisfying portion. You cannot wish for anything more than this.

"All my capacious powers can wish,
In thee is richly stored;
Nor can my soul conceive a joy
Which is not in my Lord."

I think I may add—and the experience of every believer will bear me out—we have to-day a portion in which we take *intense delight*. I tried in a poor way to show that God had a delight in his people. Beloved, do not his people, when they are in a right state of heart, have an intense delight in him? Friends, we have known what it is to have delight in our children, delight in our Church; we have had delight in this house of prayer; we have delight in one another, in sweet companionship and communion; but if you have ever tasted delight in God, you will say with Rutherford, "I have eaten the bread of angels, and my mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of this world." God giveth us "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." "I will satiate the soul of my priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." Oh the delights that we have in God! They are not ankle-deep delights, nor knee-deep delights; but they are a river to swim in. Here we can bathe our souls: here we riot and revel in inexhaustible luxuriance of delight; here our spirit stretches her wings and mounts like an eagle; here she expands herself, and only wishes she were more capacious, and therefore she cries, "Lord, expand me, enlarge my heart, that I may hold more of thee." Often have we felt in the spirit with Rutherford, when he cried "Lord, make me a heart as large as heaven, that I may hold thee in it! But since the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, Lord, make my soul as wide as seven heavens, that I may contain thy fulness." "O that the Lord would bless me indeed, and enlarge my coasts."

And lastly, this is to the saints of God an *eternal* portion. Ungodly man, you have your portion now; it will melt sir, when the last fire comes it will consume; but the lot of the believers will outlast the fire; the conflagration which devoureth all the work of man's hands, shall not be able to touch even to the scorching any part or parcel of the portion of believers. Indeed, it is in the world to come that believers shall have their portion. Here they have none except trials and troubles; "in the world ye shall have tribulation." But as God cannot be seen, and as he is the believer's portion, so their portion cannot be seen. It is a good remark of an excellent commentator upon that passage, "For which cause he is not ashamed to be called their God." He writes to this effect, "If it were

only for this world, God would be ashamed to be called his people's God, for his adversaries would say, 'Look at those people, how tried they are, what troubles they have, who is their God? and' saith he 'the Lord speaks as if he might be ashamed to be called their God, if this life were all; but the Scripture says, 'Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.'" Thus may the Lord turn upon his enemies, and say "I am their God, and although I *do* chasten them sore, and lead them through the deep waters, yet see what I am preparing for them—see them as they shall be when I shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." Hence it is in the prospect of bliss so ecstatic, joy so boundless, glory so eternal, that he is not ashamed to be called their God.

We are not ashamed, brethren, to call Jehovah our God. Now let us go our way this morning to our homes, let us eat the fat and drink the sweet in God; let us put on our beauteous array and be apparelled with the sun, and have the moon under our feet. Let us go forth as princes of the blood-royal, and act according to our quality. Let us rejoice in the Lord alway; let us show to the world that we are a happy and a blessed people, until our adversaries shall have their mouths watering while they say, "Let us live the life and die the death of the righteous." "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places and we have a goodly heritage."

Dear friends, I shall only ask in conclusion: are there not many here who cannot say, "Thou art my portion, O Lord?" Will you do me this favour this morning? When you get home will you think what your portion is, and cast your accounts up? If you cannot put God in the list, I tell you that when you have cast all your portion up, it comes to nothing. It may glitter for a season, but it shall go out like brambles that crackle under the pot, but which die out afterwards in a little heap of white ashes. You have nothing if you have not God. Ask if it is worth while for the sake of this empty world to lose eternal things: and if you are convinced it is not, then may God lead you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and in the Lord Jesus only. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Or, to give you the full, as Christ puts it, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved;" he that with his heart believeth in Christ, and with his mouth makes a profession of faith, (and it should be done in baptism,) shall be saved. God grant us grace to believe, then our portion is sure for ever and ever, in this world and in the world to come.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD'S CARE OF HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 27TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye."—Zechariah ii. 8.

GOD'S love to his ancient people is the theme of many a psalm, and deserves to be rehearsed in the ears of every generation. Abraham was by nature as a rough unhewn stone, but the Lord who chose him in the quarry, having hewn him from the rock, made him a polished pillar, a monument of divine faithfulness. The Lord set his love upon him while he was a Syrian ready to perish; he brought him out of the land of his nativity, and called him from his father's house. Having made a covenant with the solitary man, he multiplied his seed until they became like the stars of heaven for number. The kindness which God shewed towards Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he retained towards his chosen people, who sprang of their loins. Even when to all appearance he had deserted them, his face was towards them for good. If he sent a famine, and broke the staff of life, he provided seven years of plenty in Egypt, that the storehouses of Pharoah might be full for their sakes; if the Egyptians heavily oppressed them, then all the powers of nature were put out of their accustomed pathway to emancipate them from the house of bondage. When he had brought them out into the howling wilderness, his path dropped fatness, the heavens rained forth bread, and the rocks flowed with rivers; he made men to eat angels' food; he carried them as on eagles' wings; he could truly say, "I shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen;" he made his Jeshurun to ride upon the high places of the earth, and fed his Israel with royal dainties, "butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat." Wherever they went, their foes fled before them,—Amalek was put to confusion before the people of the Lord; Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, felt the terror of their arm. Even the false prophet, as he looked from the mountain's brow upon them, could only say, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." In due time he brought this people into the best spot of land which the earth

knew—a country which indolence and tyranny have rendered barren, but which anciently overflowed with superabundant fertility. He brought them to a land of hills and valleys, of springs and rivers,—a land out of whose bowels they might take iron and copper, and treasures in abundance. He established them in a land which flowed with milk and honey, so fertile that even its spontaneous productions, as exampled in the grapes of Eshcol, rivalled the products of the choicest husbandry. Having brought them into this goodly heritage, he drove out the former inhabitants that he might plant his people, and make them dwell in safety alone. How gracious he was to them in the days of Joshua, and in the years which followed! When he mapped out their lots according to their tribes, he rejoiced to dwell in the midst of them; he had his tabernacle in Shiloh, and his dwelling-place in Zion. He showed not himself unto other people, but only unto this nation upon which his heart was set. He chastened them, but he raised up judges for their deliverance. At last he gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath; but he sent unto them David—a man after his own heart, before whom their enemies were rooted out, and the nobles among their persecutors were made like Zebah and Zalmunna who fell by the hand of Gideon. Greatly he blessed the nation under David and his immediate successors! Everything in the neighbouring countries was ordered only to bring peace and prosperity to the chosen land—thy land, O God, which thou hast overshadowed with thy wings. Ofttimes they provoked him, but his anger waxed not hot against them. When he lifted up his rod, his strokes were few, and he repented of the evil which he did unto them. At last, when they became incorrigible in their sins, and made their brows like flint, and their hearts like adamant, for a season he gave them up to captivity. They were taken to Assyria, they were carried away to the rivers of Babylon. The days of their banishment were many, and they wept in the bitterness of their soul. Still, even in their captivity he loved them. When they had forgotten *him*, he had not forgotten *them*, and in due time he brought them up again out of the house of their bondage, once more to set them in their land. It was about this time when he would give to his people a fresh deliverance, as memorable as the coming out of Egypt, that Zechariah testified "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye;" as much as to say, "I smite you, but I hate the nation that oppresses you; I take the axe to cut down your stubborn pride, but lo, I will break the axe to shivers; I send against you the executioners of my anger, but I will surely punish them also for the evil which they have done. He that toucheth you—even though *I* be the great first cause of the terrible onslaught upon you,—'he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye,' and I will be avenged on him in the day of my wrath."

Thus introduced, the text seems to teach us three lessons, upon which we shall speak briefly, and God grant it may be to your edification. It tells us, first of all, *God's esteem of his people;* secondly, *the danger which surrounds persecutors;* and, thirdly, *the safety of the Church of God;* for it may be well to remind you that the Jewish nation was a type of the Church of Christ.

I. First, then, our text teaches us GOD'S ESTEEM OF HIS PEOPLE. He esteems them as much as men value their eyesight, and is as careful to protect them from injury, as men are to protect the apple of their eye. The pupil of the eye is the tenderest part of the tenderest organ, and very fitly sets forth the inexpressible tenderness of God's love. As Calvin remarks, "There is nothing more delicate or more tender than the eye in the body of a man; for were one to bite my finger or prick my arm or my legs, or even severely to wound me, I should feel no such pain as by having the pupil of my eye injured." Behold, then, beloved, a mystery of lovingkindness and affection. The Lord sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: how marvellous that he has thoughts of everlasting love towards such worthless things! As we said this morning,* it is wonderful that God should even notice such insignificant creatures as men, that he, in his infiniteness should be able even to discover such infusoria in this drop of matter which we call the world. But that wonder is totally eclipsed by another, namely, that God should *love* such utterly worthless, as well as insignificant creatures. Oh! Great One, when thou didst give thy heart, were there not some creatures worthy of it? Nay! there could be none, for even Gabriel himself was not fit to match with the eternal God. The cherubim and seraphim, the presence angels that stand before God as his holy servitors for ever, what were they? they were not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly. The noblest created intelligences are so far inferior to our God, that only by wondrous condescension could he *love* them. O God, how is it that thou couldst have chosen the debased, depraved, rebellious, hard-hearted creature called man? Why didst thou look upon such-an-one and bring him into thy favour? What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? This enquiry we cannot answer, and therefore, no more curious to solve this mystery, we will weave it into our everlasting song, and we will sing of thy sovereign grace before thy throne for ever. 'Twas of thy grace, of thy own will and good pleasure, that thou hast lifted us up from the dunghill and made us to sit among princes.

It is not for us to know wherefore the Lord hath his people so highly in estimation, for we cannot search to the bottom of this divine mystery; but, brethren, God's love, which at first came to us freely, has so ennobled us in Christ, that God's present esteem of us in Jesus is not without reason and justification. Love without cause has now imparted and imputed such loveliness to its objects, that in Christ they are fitting subjects for love's embrace. Know ye not that the saints are the *masterpieces of his workmanship?* God has shown his wisdom in balancing the clouds, and guiding the stars in their orbits; infinite wisdom is discoverable in every flower and in every living thing; but the wisdom and the skill of God are far more clearly to be seen in the believer, than in any other work of the divine hand. Man, born the first time, was fearfully and wonderfully made, but new-created, and

* See No. 447 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

regenerated, he is far more full of marvels than he was before. Well, therefore, because of the divine skill which has been shown in our re-creation, may we be the objects of divine care. When Bernard Palissy had, after long struggles, invented that valuable ware which still remains unmatched, we can suppose that, if a person had entered his room and broken those invaluable dishes, which were worth their weight in gold, he would have said, "I had sooner that you had burnt my house, or that you had maimed my person, than break these things which have cost me so much thought, so many trials in the furnace, and so much daily watching, and nightly care." When the poor man had pulled up the very floor of his room, to heat the furnace for the last time, before he saw the precious stuff come from the crucible, his work must have been dear to him; and when we think that God, our God, hath made his people the objects of his eternal thoughts, the trophies of his noblest skill, vessels of honour fit even for the Master's use, it is but little wonder that he should guard them with a jealous care, even as men do the apple of their eye.

Moreover, all the people of God are the object of *the dearest purchase* that was ever known, since they were redeemed not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Stand ye at the foot of Calvary, and let the groans of Christ pierce your heart; behold his head crowned with thorns; see ye his hands and his feet streaming like fountains of blood; think for a moment of the awful anguish which his spirit suffered, of the unknown pangs he bore, when he redeemed our souls unto God; and you will readily conclude that love so amazing, which could pay a price so stupendous, would not easily loose its hold of that which it has thus purchased unto itself. We think little of ourselves, when we value ourselves at any thing less than the price which Jesus paid; we dishonour the Lord which bought us, if we think ourselves only fit to live unto the flesh, and to this poor temporary world; when, indeed, we are fitted for a heavenly world, and for divinest purposes, seeing that Christ the Son of the Highest shed his very heart's blood to redeem us from our sins. Well, I say, may he value highly, those whom he has so dearly bought!

Furthermore, let us remember that to God the Father, the saints are Christ's *most tender memorial*, monuments of Christ's passion and conflict, the engraven tablets of his death. What is there in heaven which is the record of the Redeemer's achievement? Yonder spirits before the throne are the monuments of the battle and the victory. What is there to bear witness on earth to what the Lord has accomplished? We who have by faith believed, are now the living triumphals of his conquest. If you and I had erected a lasting and valuable memorial to some beloved child, we should think it a grievous insult and a serious injury if an adversary should wantonly and wickedly defile it; but so the Lord looketh upon his own people as standing mementoes, and he counteth it no small sin, no mean offence, for any of his adversaries, be they ever so great, to touch his anointed, and do harm to his chosen. As obelisks, arches, columns, and pillars are raised in commemoration of heroes and their glories, even so are the saints the sublime memorials of Jesus. Precious are they for this cause, to the heart of him who delighteth

in the honours of his only begotten Son. The hosts of heaven shall jealously guard these living stones of memorial.

Yet more: remember that Christ's people are *God's own children*, and you know how even *we*, although we are evil, could not stand still to see our children ill-treated. I have heard a man say sometimes, "You may strike me, and I will not return the blow; you may even spit in my face, and I will put up with the insult; but if you touch my children my blood is in my face, I cannot endure it." Ask a woman what it is that brings her mettle up the most, is it not if she sees her little ones ill-treated, or hears a word of false accusation spoken concerning them? The God of heaven and earth will not have the princes of the blood royal ill-used; they who are descended from his loins, and are thus the nobles and the peers of the court of heaven, are not to be trodden under the foot of man. God will avenge their quarrel at last. Surely as the world shall look on Christ, whom they have pierced, and mourn, so shall they look on the injured and persecuted Church, and mourn because they despised the excellent of the earth, and threw God's jewels into the mire. They are his children, I say; and therefore he loves them. Look around even to the brute creatures. When we would describe the creature most terrible, we speak of the bear robbed of her whelps; if you would describe the strong lion when he lasheth his sides with fury, is it not when his cubs have been taken away? Then he rusheth to the attack, fearless of the spear, and of the hunter, meditating terribly how he may destroy the murderer of the young lion; so shall it be with the Lord God Omnipotent, his fury shall be kindled against the enemy, and he shall tear him in pieces if he touch any of the house of Judah, or of the seed of the Son of David. The King who is in the midst of them is mighty, and he is strong who is their deliverer.

Yet, again, no doubt there is a special reason why God is thus jealous over his people, since he who touches them, does to a certain degree, touch *the person of Christ*—the Father's firstborn. Are they not members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones? The cry of Christ from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" clearly shows that Christ looks upon the persecution of humble men and women as an insult to himself. Should any wound your hand and then say, "I have not injured *you*;" you would reply, "But it is *my* hand and it is so much a part of myself that I cannot separate myself from the injury." So is it with Christ, the poorest, meanest, most illiterate Christian, is in the closest union with the glorious head of the body, and it will be at the foeman's eternal hazard if he touch him since he is part of Christ's mystical body. If you hurt his people wilfully, the Son of man will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," and the recompense shall follow.

Do you not know that the children of God have a relation towards God the Father, in respect of their being *partakers of his character and dignity*? The saints are God's ambassadors. Amongst all nations an insult offered to an ambassador is an offence which cannot be readily wiped out; God's ambassadors to the sons of men are his chosen people; they are Christ's representatives on earth, so far as they live up to their profession. They who are the people of God are the Christs of this

generation; anointed of the Lord, and sent forth to tell of his love. Their life, if it be as it should be, is the picture of virtue, and an ensample to mankind. Now the world's hatred to these men is but a part of their hatred to the Most High. They see his image in his servants, and wantonly insult it, or contemptuously disregard it. When men oppose the people of God, it is because of their holiness. If it could be clearly proved that the world's opposition to the Church was on account of the Church's inconsistency, then it might be pardonable, or even virtuous; but we believe the real reason of the world's enmity is the Church's holiness. Were she not Godlike and divine, she would not be attacked; if she were not clear as the sun, fair as the moon, she would not be terrible as an army with banners, nor would the foe go forth in battle to meet her. Well, then, because holiness is insulted in a persecuted saint, because righteousness is itself debased and defamed when the righteous man is slandered and dishonoured, therefore the battle is not ours but the Lord's, and he will surely deliver his chosen. Because God espouseth the quarrel of the virtuous, and taketh up the gauntlet for the weak who desire to serve him, therefore see to it, ye sons of Ham, ye children of the persecutor, see to it, for when he fitteth his arrows to the bow, and draweth his sword out of the scabbard, it shall go ill with you, for he remembereth his people, and he will avenge his own elect.

II. The second point is THE DANGER OF PERSECUTORS: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.

If a man should seek to thrust his finger into our eye with the purpose of destroying our sight, I think we should not deliberate long as to the way in which to treat him; we should take good care that at all risks to our antagonist we defended a thing so precious. Now, when any molest the people of God, they may be certain of this, that God will surely visit them; therefore let persecutors take heed how they meddle with God's eyes. According to the learned Blayney, our text may be read, "Whosoever touches you, touches the apple of his own eye." In this sense we understand the passage as declaring that God shall cause the enemies of his Church to work their own ruin; they shall pull out their eyes by their own fingers. The visitation of God will surely blast and wither those persecutors who go on in sin. At times it curses in the form of temporal death; more often, however, in the form of spiritual hardness of heart. I am not one of those who look upon everything that happens in this world as being a judgment from God. If a boat goes down to the bottom of the sea on a Sunday, I do not look upon that as a judgment on those who are in it, any more than if it had gone to the bottom on a Monday; and though many good people get frightened when they hear one affirm this doctrine, yet I cannot help their frights, but

like my Master I must tell them that they who perish so are not sinners above all the sinners that be in Jerusalem. I looked the other day at "Fox's Book of Martyrs," and I saw there an illustration of that deeply-rooted mistake of Christian people, concerning God's always punishing men's sins in this life. Fox draws a picture of a Popish priest who is insulting the faith, speaking lightly of the blood of Jesus, and exalting the Virgin Mary, and he drops down dead in the pulpit; and Fox holds him up as a picture of a great sinner who dropped down dead for speaking lightly of Jesus, and the good man affirms the wicked priest's death to be a judgment from heaven. Well, perhaps Fox is correct, but still I do not see the connexion between his dropping down dead and the language he employed, for many a preacher who has been exalting Christ has fallen down dead in the pulpit; and happy was it for such a man that he was engaged in minding his charge at the time. The fact is, Providence smites good men and bad men too; and when the storm rages, and the hurricane howls through the forest, not only are the brambles and briars shaken and uprooted, but goodly oaks crack and break too. We are not to look for God's judgments, except in special cases, in this life. This judgment is in the world to come. Yet there have been some special cases. Look at Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the greatest persecutors that the Israelitish nation ever had—his death was so awful that I should disgust you if I described it. Remember, too, Herod the Great. "The disease of which Herod the Great died, and the misery which he suffered under it, plainly showed that the hand of God was then in a signal manner upon him; for not long after the murders at Bethlehem, his distemper, as Josephus informs us, daily increased in an unheard-of manner. He had a lingering and wasting fever, and grievous ulcers in his entrails and bowels; a violent colic, and insatiable appetite; a venomous swelling in his feet; convulsions in his nerves; a perpetual asthma, and offensive breath; rottenness in his joints and other members; accompanied with prodigious itchings, crawling worms, and intolerable smell; so that he was a perfect hospital of incurable distempers." "The Roman emperor, Julian, a determined enemy of Christianity, was mortally wounded in a war with the Persians. In this condition, we are told that he filled his hand with blood, and casting it into the air, said, "O Galilean! thou hast conquered." History affords you many such cases. God has seemed to say to his providence, as David said to Solomon concerning Joab, "Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." I read the other day a list, I should think, of a hundred of the mighty persecutors—Roman and Grecian, and so forth—all of whom came to a most shocking and untimely end, and in the face of so many facts, one did feel it fair to draw the inference that "Bloody and ungodly men shall not live out half their days." There is a story told of the days of the

Cavaliers, when they used to hunt up the Puritans for meeting in the woods, in the fields, or on secluded banks, to worship God; one old man, who was parish constable, was asked to be an informer and hunt up a certain meeting in his parish in Northamptonshire, but the old man said "No," he'd have nothing to do with it—not that he liked those people, for he hated them; but," he said, "I should not advise any of you to meddle with any of these people. In the good old days, when Sir Harry was alive, he hunted them, and took eight troopers with him to harry the Puritans all round this region, and," said he, "the old man is dead, six of the soldiers are dead; some of them were hanged, and some of them broke their necks, and I myself fell off my horse and broke my collar-bone in the act of persecuting them. For my part I have had warnings enough, and I will never meddle with them again." And I have no doubt that history could tell hundreds of tales of that kind, where God has seemed, at last, to leave off his general rule of longsuffering and of patience, and to give to his foes a blow there and then, for their hectoring and intolerable hunting of his children, and harrying them out of the land. Far oftener, however, the penalty hath come in spiritual things. He has left them to wax worse and worse, till they have become so hardened in sin that they "breathed out threatenings against the saints," and licked up the blood of God's children as dogs licked up the blood of Naboth. No sermon has had power to move them; no truth could awaken them; no warnings of Providence could alarm them; no wooing invitations could win their hearts; they have gone down, down, down a steep descent with their feet slipping in gore—in the red crimson mire, crimson with blood of saints—and in hell they have lifted up their eyes being in torment. "I'd like," said one old Romanist in the days of Luther, "I'd like to ride up to my horse's bridle in the blood of Lutherans." And he had his wish ere long, in another way, for in a dreadful bursting of blood-vessels in his own body, he laid weltering in his gore; not up to his horse's bridle, but covered to his very soul with a suffocation of blood. God has done this, spiritually, to other men. They wanted to slay other men's souls, and the blood, as it were, of their own souls has drowned them. They would cut off the light, and God has left them in darkness; they would throw away the salt, and God has given them up to rot, and to become putrid; they slew God's ambassadors, and God has proclaimed eternal war against them—a war which rages now, and will rage in the world to come.

I do not know whether I happen to have any person here who might be called a persecutor. We do not have much persecution to suffer now-a-days; at least, it does not come to much. I know that many servants lose their places; many wives are ill-treated by their husbands—now

and then some poor husbands by their wives, and I know that children have been made wretched by their parents. Ah! but when you put these things side by side with Smithfield and the old Lollard's Tower, they come to nothing. Yet I know that there are many men who only want power and they would be as violent against God's people as ever the tyrants were in the olden times. Very well, then, as you cannot do what you would do, since you do what you can, God shall visit that also upon your head, and you shall find that the jest, and the sneer, and the jibe, and the slander, and the cruel mocking, shall by no means lack their reward.

But I will not dwell upon a point which we care so little to mention, but turn rather to the last point, upon which I speak with brevity.

III. THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH. "The Church is in danger! The Church is in danger!" Do you believe that, dear friends? No, it depends upon whose Church it is; but if it is God's Church, all the croakers in the world cannot alarm us, for we believe that God's Church is safe enough, despite everything that may be said. "Oh, but the Church is in danger from Romanism!" Nonsense; God can keep that in bounds. The dragon would have drowned the woman with the floods of his mouth centuries ago, if the Lord had not secured her from harm for ever. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church, much less then shall the gates of Rome prevail. It is not the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ that is in danger. Perhaps the fat benefices may be; I will not say anything about that; I do not know of any particular promise upon which unscriptural officers and worldly dignitaries can rely, but the Church of God has special security guaranteed by covenant, by promise, and by oath. God is her pledged preserver, for there is a promise—"I the Lord do keep her; I will water her every moment: lest any hurt her, I will keep her, night and day." The Church is not in danger, and why? Well, first, the very frame of nature was made to protect her. We take up a chestnut or other seed, and we find outside a prickly envelope: then there comes a hard shell, then inside a soft one, and then a film, and then another film, and at last, somewhere in the centre, you get the life-germ; and all the rest was made to exist for a time, and to rot, and to decay, in order to preserve the life-germ from hurt, and to furnish food for it when it began to spring up. Now, I look upon this great vaulted roof of heaven and the whole earth as being but the surrounding envelope in which God has wrapped up the living seed of his Church. You will have to break the whole constitution of earth before you will be able to surprise with destruction those whom God has surrounded by munitions of such stupendous strength. Speaking after a mystical sort, the mountains are round about Jerusalem; the solid rocks of the earth are like arms beneath

her; the very stars are her watchers, and the firmament and the heaven of heavens are the gates that shut out her raging foes. When the Lord made the heavens and the earth, what was the drift of the whole thing? For what was the earth preparing in the old geologic past? Preparing, you tell me, for man. But why and wherefore was man made? God made the whole race of man, but in respect of that chosen life within the race, those elect men and women who are as the substance which is in the oak when it loses its leaves, the holy seed which is the substance of the race and of all time. And when man came into the earth and did multiply, and God divided the nations, and scattered them to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, he divided the whole, looking to his people, seeing at one glance how it would be best for this empire to stand, or that monarchy to fall—how it would be more advantageous for that dynasty to exist through a whole stream of kings, or for that monarch to be cut off in his prime, ere his son should be born who should take the sceptre from the dying hand—I say that the whole machinery of nature, the whole work of God which he hath made, is intended to be the shell in which the Lord preserves his people, and there must come indeed—"The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds," and a total unloosing of the pillars of earth and heaven, ere ye can perish, O ye children of God!

But again, not only does nature, but providence, work for the protection of God's people. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Stupendous agencies are abroad. The wheels are so high that they are dreadful, but the wheels are full of eyes, and they only turn in such a way as shall preserve the Church of the living God. When we shall see the end from the beginning, we shall be in amazement as to how it was that everything turned upon the axle of the Church —how the greatest wheel turned on its pole to bring out the elect, to fetch up out of their spiritual darkness the generation who were afterwards to be enlightened; how the biggest wave that followed the keel of the Church's ship was ordained to wash it onward; and how the very wave which seemed to roll the other way, did but in some mystic manner still waft her onward to her desired haven; how storms and tempests, plagues and conflagrations, wars and bloodsheds, all co-worked to bring out the people of God, that the Lord's name might be glorified in them. Like some huge steam vessel, providence bears on the Church, and you must reverse those wheels which lash the sea of events to foam, before you can detain the Church from her haven.

Yet further, not to detain you longer, the Church is constantly preserved, we know, by the ministry of angels. Unseen by us, the angels of God keep watch and ward around us. They bear up the Church's foot lest she dash it against a stone. They cover her head in the day

of battle lest the fiery shafts should penetrate her helmet; by night and by day the watchers of God keep constant guard over the blood-royal of heaven. Let us not be deceived in this matter, thinking that we have to deal here with a fancy or a myth. Angels have more to do with this world than we dream. They are more potent influences for the saints' good than ever we have known, for they are the ten thousand chariots of God, the ten thousand times ten thousand saints of the Most High who stand in their battle array this day. If your eyes be opened, you will be able to say with the Prophet—"More are they that are with us than they that be with them." Reckon the angels as your friends; put them not down as though they were weak and feeble, but believe them to be strong, and then ye shall not doubt but that the Church shall be preserved as the apple of God's eye.

Then, last of all, God preserves his Church by the overruling of his grace. By a sort of holy alchemy he fetcheth gold out of dross, medicine out of poison, success out of disaster. From seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression. So that the evil doings of the Church's enemies turn out for her good in the end, and their worst projects are in the wisdom of God but designs for her advancement. Let us rest in this, then, quite confident that by all means and by any means the Church shall always be safe. She rocks to-day; a big wave seemed to strain her timbers, but he who built her is on board; the eternal hand grasps the helm, and the Mighty One with unruffled brow looks at the storm and bids the ship cut through the foam. She has not turned as yet, though rocks and quicksands threatened to be in her path. Straight as a line, "as an arrow from a bow drawn by an archer strong," she sped on her splendid flight, and on she shall go though a thousand hells boiled over to stay her heaven-ordained mission. Yonder mighty billow, that seems ready to swallow her up and give her an eternal grave, shall break before her prow; and if she be for a moment buried in the spray, she shall either come up white from the washing, or she shall leap it, ascending up to heaven upon its crest; and if she goeth down again, as though she would descend into the depths of the sea—the depths of defeat and dismay—it shall be but to bring up some sinner from the depth, and save a soul that otherwise might have been lost. Oh, blessed be God, the Church is never insecure, nay, nor yet one of her children.

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever,
Nothing from his love can sever."

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hand,
Till the decisive hour."

The apple of God's eye shall not be touched yet. We shall never see a blinded deity, and until then we shall never hear that the people of God have perished, and that the Church of Christ has been destroyed by her enemies. Courage, then, soldiers of Christ, courage! Turn not back through shame or fear. Another rush, another advance upon the foe, for ye cannot be wounded, ye are invulnerable; ye cannot be defeated, ye are invincible. God is in you, and ye must be almighty. He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. Therefore dare, run risks, and venture for God, for you are always safe when you are venturing for him.

Our final question is, "Am I thus dear to God?" I would like you, now that I send you away, to ask yourselves that question. You, dear friends, up yonder, and you in this mighty tier, and you below, ask yourselves, "Am I thus dear to God?" Let each man and woman ask that question. How can I answer it? Is Christ dear to me? Then I am dear to God. Is Christ dear to me to-night; do I rest on him? If I do, I am saved, and if I do not, why should I not now? If I never have believed on him, why should I not now? If I trust him, he will save me. Lord, I trust thee. Can you say that from your heart? Then the Spirit of God has helped you to say it, and if to-night, poor soul, whoever thou mayest be, thou wilt repose simply and wholly upon the merit of Jesus' blood, and the power of his intercession in heaven, you are saved. Go your way, your sins are forgiven; you are accepted in the beloved, if you have trusted Christ. God help you to rely on Jesus now, and to his name be praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COMPASSION FOR THE MULTITUDE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 1ST, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me."—Matthew xiv. 17, 18.

As was Christ, my brethren, when in this world, so are we also. Such, indeed, is our calling of God. As Jesus was "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," so he saith to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." How memorable are those words of our Lord—"As thou, Father, hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world!" And how weighty are those expressions of the Apostle—"We pray you *in Christ's stead!*"—"We then, as *workers together* with him!" There is something more than an interesting parallel that I want you to observe. A rich allegory appears to be couched in the simple record of the evangelists. The history of Christ is in type a history of his Church. A skilful reader would soon think this matter out. You will remember how Christ's Church was wrapped in swaddling bands at the first, how she was laid in the manger of obscurity, how her life was conspired against by heathen kings. You will remember her baptism of the Holy Ghost, her trials and her temptations in the wilderness. The life of Christ afterwards will soon be thought out by you as shadowing forth a picture of the career of the Church. There is scarcely any point in the entire history of Jesus, from the manger at Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane, which is not besides its personal narrative, a typical and pictorial history of his Church. Thus the Lord has been pleased to bequeath to his Church a great example written in his own holy life. As he raised the dead, so is she to do it through his Spirit that dwelleth in her. As he healed the sick, so is she to carry on a great healing ministry throughout the world. Or to come to our text, as Christ fed the hungry, so the Church wherever she meeteth with those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to bless them in the name of him who has said, "They shall be filled." Your business as a Church to-day, and my business as a member of the Church of Christ, is to feed hungry souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge with the bread of life. The case before us we think will

furnish a noble picture of our duty, of our mission, and of what we expect the Master to do for us that we may work mightily for him.

Let us endeavour first to glance at the whole scene, collecting into harmony the accounts given by the four evangelists; and afterwards we shall proceed to consider two practical lessons to be deduced from it.

This miracle is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is some little divergence in each, as there naturally would be, for no four spectators could give the same description of any one scene; but what one omits another supplies; a point that will be most interesting to one, had failed to strike another, while a third has been interested in something which the fourth had altogether omitted. It appears that Christ had sought out a waste region near to the town of Bethsaida. Bethsaida was a place which he had frequently visited. Earnestly, on another occasion, did he warn Bethsaida and Chorazin, reminding them that their privileges would rise up in judgment against them to condemn them for their unbelief. He had sought out this waste place for the purpose of retirement, or for the sake of both himself and his disciples, that they might rest from their weary toils. The people follow him, they throng him all day long. He preaches to them the gospel, he heals their sick; and it was somewhere in the afternoon that the Master, ever patient and prescient of human wants, calls Philip to himself. Now, Philip was of Bethsaida, and he said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" This he said to try him to see whether his faith was proof against misgiving. Had Philip been a wise disciple he would have replied, "Master, thou canst feed them." But he was a weak follower of the mighty Lord. You know he afterwards proved his ignorance by saying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth;" and he then received a mild rebuke,—"Have I been so long a time with you, and yet thou hast not known me?" On this, Philip shows that he has not yet learned the lesson of faith. He cannot believe in anything he cannot see with the eyes of sense. Puzzled and amazed, he betakes himself to his fellow disciples to talk over the matter. Now, Andrew suggests that there is a lad hard by that has five barley loaves and a few small fishes. Certainly, Andrew thinks though they will not be enough, *it is our duty to do our best.* So the loaves and fishes are purchased out of the scanty store that Judas handed out, not perhaps without some grief to his heart, that he should have to look so much after other people. As the day wears on, and the sun begins to set, the disciples come to the Master. Though the proposal had been suggested by him, they seem to think he has forgotten it. So they come to him and say, "Master, send the multitude away." They had thought over the problem of how to feed these people, and had come to this conclusion, that they could not do it. As they could not feed them, the next best thing would be to send them away to provide for themselves. Since they could not supply their necessities, they would endeavour to shut their eyes to their needs. "Master, send them away; let them go and buy for themselves." The Master promptly replies, "'They need not depart:' there is no necessity for it: 'give *ye* them to eat.'" Indeed, he spake wisely. Why should hungry men depart from the householder, from him who feedeth all things, who openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.

"Give ye them to eat," said he; that he might bring out from them a fair acknowledgment of their poverty. "Master," they said, "we have here but five barley loaves, and a few small fishes: what are they among so many?" Lifting up their eyes upon the vast assembled mass, they roughly calculate that there must be five thousand men, beside a fair complement of women and of children. The Master bids them bring those loaves and fishes. He takes them, but before he breaks them, being a God of order, he bids the people sit down in companies. Mark, who is always such a keen observer, and paints, like Hogarth, all the little minutiæ of the picture—says, they sat down on the green grass, as if it were exceedingly abundant and verdant just there. Then he adds, they sat down by companies, afterwards using a word, which is translated "in ranks" in our version, but the Greek is such as you would use if you spoke of a long range of beds in a flower garden—parterres. They sat down in green beds, as it were, with walks in between them. Mark seems to have got the idea that they were like a number of flowers whom his Master went round to water. When they had all thus sat down, so that the strong might not struggle after the bread, and tread it under foot, and that the weak might not be neglected, all placed in their rows, then the Master lifted up his eyes before them all, asked a blessing, brake the bread, and gave it to the disciples, and also of the fishes. The disciples went round and distributed to each man, to each woman, and child, and they did eat. They had been fasting all day long, so I dare say we should not be very far wrong if, following the example of a countryman whom I once heard, we laid a marked emphasis on the word "did"—"they *did* eat!" They eat till their hunger was appeased; they eat till they were filled; they eat till they were abundantly satisfied. Then, I could suppose, on the table, or on a spot of the green grass, where Christ had laid out the first bread and fishes, the fragments that lay there had in the meantime multiplied. One does not like the idea of the disciples going round to gather up the odds and ends and crumbs that had fallen from each man; one would hardly think it would have been seemly. But here was bread that was not injured, that had not fallen in the dust or the mire—fragments, and they gathered up more than they had at first. Here, too, we have a wonder. Things had been multiplied by division, and had been added to by subtraction. More was left than there had been at the first. No doubt that was done to disarm doubt and to defeat scepticism. In after days, some of those men might say, "True, we did eat and were satisfied, or it seemed as if we did, but it might have been in a kind of dream." That bread which was left, the twelve baskets full, furnished something solid for them to look at, so that they might not think it an illusion. They gathered up the twelve baskets full. This seems to be the crowning part of the miracle. Our Lord himself, in referring to the miracle in after days, constantly says, "When we fed five thousand with five barley loaves, how many baskets had ye? And when we fed four thousand, how many baskets full did ye take up?" as if the taking up of the baskets full at the end was the clenching of the nail to drive home the blessed argument that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who gave his people bread to eat, even as Moses fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness.

Having thus considered the facts, we shall take them as a basis upon which to build, God helping us, two practical lessons. The text and the miracle itself teach us, first, *our mission and our weakness;* secondly, *our line of duty and Christ's strength.*

I. We are clearly taught here OUR MISSION AND OUR WEAKNESS. Our mission! Behold before you, disciples of Christ, this very day, thousands of men, and women, and children, who are hungering for the bread of life. They hunger till they faint. They spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. They fall down famished in your highways, perishing for lack of knowledge. Still worse, when they faint, there be some who pretend to feed them. Superstition goeth about, and offers them stones instead of bread, and serpents instead of fish. The Papist and the ceremonialist offer to sell these hungry souls something to gratify them; they try to feed, but it will not satisfy; they do but eat the wind and swallow the whirlwind. The infidel tries to persuade them that they are not hungry, they are only a little nervous; thus he mocks their appetite. As soon will the body be satisfied with bubbles, or the mouth be filled with shadows, as the soul be satisfied with delusions and inventions of man. They faint; they famish; they are ready to die. Those who pretend to supply them do but mock and tantalize their needs. Nor can they feed themselves; their wallets are empty. When Adam fell, he beggared all his posterity; neither man, nor woman, nor child among them is able to satisfy his or her own hunger. The ten thousands of your race in this land,—in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, and Australia,—not one among them, should they all subscribe together, could find so much as one loaf upon which a single soul might feed. Barrenness, leanness, and sterility have seized upon all the fields of man's tillage. They yield him nothing. He sows, but he reaps not; he ploughs, but obtains no harvest. By the works of the flesh no man living can be justified, and in the devices of human tradition or human reason, no souls can possibly find substantial comfort. See ye, disciples of Christ, see ye the great need which is before your eyes. Open the eyes of your understanding now, let your bowels move, let your hearts beat with sympathy, let your souls be alive to pity,—do feel for those millions! I beseech you, if you cannot help them, weep over them; let there be now before your mind's eye a clear and distinct recognition of the many hundreds and thousands who are crying to you, "Feed us, for we famish; give us bread to eat, or we die."

I think I hear you reason in your hearts and whisper one to another, "Who are we that we should feed this multitude; look at their hosts, who can count them? As the stars of heaven for multitude, so are the seed of Adam. These hungry, craving mouths are almost as numerous as the sands on the sea shore; whence should we have that we should give them to eat?" Even so. Yet, remember, this is your mission. Neither do any of you well to take up and adopt a weakness of faith that was illustrated by Philip's questioning. If ever the world is to be fed, it is with Christ through the Church. Until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, we are the warriors who must carry the victorious arms of the cross to the

uttermost parts of the earth. We are the almoners of God's free bounty, until the fulness of the Gentiles be gathered in. God commands all men everywhere to repent; and we are to utter his mandate. Oh, my brethren, you know how Jesus worked the work of his Father; you know how he went about doing good; but do you know how he said, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father?" Let the words sink down into your ears. Let the vision rise perpetually before your eyes. See your work. Great as it is, dispirited as you may be by the great multitude who crave your help, yet recognize the appeal to your faith. Let the magnitude of the mission drive you the more earnestly to the work instead of deterring you from it.

Do I hear you murmur, "The multitudes are great, and scant the supply. We have but five loaves, and they are made of barley; we have but two fishes, and they are little ones. The bread hardly suffices for ourselves; the fishes are so small that they will be more bones than meat. What are these among so many?" "So I hear you tell us, sir, that we as a Church are to feed the world: how can we? How few are our talents! We are not rich in substance, we have no wealth with which to supply our missionaries, that we may send them out by hosts to lift up the banner of Christ. We have little talent: there are not many among us who are learned or wise: we have not much eloquence. We feel, though we do not feel enough:

> 'Fain my pity would reclaim,
> And snatch the firebrand from the flame;
> But feeble my compassion proves,
> And fain must weep where most it loves.'

Besides," some of you add, "what can I do individually? of what use can I be? And what can the few friends who are in earnest do? Why, the world will laugh at such a feeble body of men. They will say, 'What do these feeble Jews?' We have a mountain before us, and we have to level it to a plain: how can we do it? Our strength is not sufficient: we are destitute of power. Oh, had we the great and noble on our side! Had we kings to be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our Church! Had we the rich to give their lavish treasure, and the learned to give their wit, and the eloquent to give their golden speech, then we *might* succeed! But alas! alas! silver and gold have we none; and at the Master's feet we can lay but little: so little that it is utterly insignificant when compared with the world's pining wants, the whole creation's piteous labouring groans."

Then I think I hear you heave a sigh and say again, "There is no more that we know of, no more bread that is procurable; we cannot buy for all this multitude." If we have little gifts ourselves, we cannot buy the eloquence of others. Indeed, it were no use if it were bought, for *oratory* purchased is of no use to any cause. We need for Christ's cause the free utterance of willing men who "speak through their throats," and feel from their hearts what they propound with their lips. Such speak because they cannot help speaking. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." If we have little ability of our own, we cannot buy more of others. The offices of love can never be deputed to the

hireling. But I think I hear your disheartened spirits crying, "If we could add mercenary troops to the host of God, we might succeed,—if we could procure by our donations more help, more strength for the Lord God of hosts, then might there be bread in his house, and then might the multitudes be fed." But two hundred pennyworth would not suffice for the five thousand, and millions would not suffice for the thousand millions of poor benighted men and women. Master, what *can* we do? there are so many: we have not the bread ourselves, and we cannot buy it on their behalf.

And then I hear the groan of one who is growing grey in years, "Oh! I feel it, but it is getting late with me, and the world's necessities are getting stern; the hunger has continued until men are famished; they have been without bread till they are ready to perish and faint by the way, and the night cometh on, a long and dreary night;—who shall work then? We are ready to go down into our graves; our shadows are lengthened and our frame is shrunken; we are weak, and hang our heads like bulrushes, as men who seek the grave that has long been seeking them." Let me tell you, brethren and fathers, we who are in our opening youth, we feel that too. Good God! our days spin round us now, and our weeks seem to be hissing through the air, leaving a track like that of a burning brand. Work as we may, and some of us can say that we lose no time in Christ's cause, yet we can do nothing. We seem to be like one man alone against an innumerable host, or like a child seeking to remove a mountain with its own puny hand. Night is getting spent, we are growing sear, our years are flying by, our deaths are coming on. Souls are dying: hell is filling. Adown the cataract of destruction men are being plunged incessantly beyond our sight, beyond our hope. We cannot do it. The more we feel our responsibility, the more our infirmity oppresses us. Thou hast called us to a work that is too hard. We cannot do it, Master. We come to thy feet, and we say we cannot give these multitudes to eat. Mock us not. Command us not to impossibilities. Thou hast bidden us preach the gospel to every creature under heaven. We cannot reach them. We are too few; we are too feeble; we are too weak; we are too devoid of talent. Master, we cannot do it. At thy feet we are ready to fall in sheer despair. But hark! I hear the cries of the multitude as they come up in our ears. They say to us, "We are perishing: will you let us perish? We are famishing: will you let us famish? Our fathers have gone down to hell, and our fathers' fathers have perished for lack of the bread that came down from heaven, and will you let *us* die?" Across from Africa the multitudes look over the sea to us, and they beckon with their fingers—"Will you let *us* perish? Shall we for ever be hunting ground for those who delight in chains and bloodshed?" From Asia they lift up the cry—"Will you always leave us? Shall we always be the bondslaves of Juggernaut, Brahma, Servia, and Vishnu?" From Australia they cry to us, such as have not already perished; the Aborigines cry, "Shall we never see the light? Shall we never hear the gospel?" And worse than the Aborigines, the wail of not a few who remember in night-dreams the services of our sanctuaries, but have forgotten in their day-labours the observance of our Sabbaths, their cry is piercing indeed. Oh! how

terrible is the wail—the combined wail that cometh up from all the nations under heaven! *One* man in Paul's dream, who said, "Come over and help us!" was enough to constrain him; and here are millions not in a dream, but in open vision, who all at once say, "Come and help us." Did we say, just now, we could not? Surely we must recal our words and say, "We must." Good Master, we must! If we cannot, we must. We feel our weakness, but there is an impulse within us that says we must do it, and we cannot stop, we dare not—we were accursed if we did. The blasts of hell and the wrath of heaven would fall upon us if we renounced the task. The world's only hope—shall we put that out? The lone star that gilds the darkness,—shall we quench that? The Saviours of men, and shall we fold our arms and let them die? No! by the love we bear thy name; by the bonds that unite us to thee; by everything that is holy before God and humane in the sight of our fellow mortals; by everything that is tender and gentle in the throbbing of our hearts and the yearning of our bowels, we say we must, though we feel we cannot.

Yet there is a strong tendency in our hearts to shift personal responsibility. "Let us send them away into the villages to buy meat." We look towards some Bethsaida in the distance, and say, "Let them go there and get good." This is a strong temptation with many Churches. Perhaps you say, "We have not got all this work to do: there are other Churches; let them do their part. In all the suburbs of London there are chapels. There is the parish church, cannot they hear the gospel there? There is the City missionary going about after them; what need that we should visit them? No doubt there are some good men preaching in the street, what necessity that I should do it? Let them go into the villages and get meat." Ah, but not so; the Master said to you, "Give *ye* them to eat." "*Ye*." Let this Church feel that it should look upon the world as if it were the only Church, and do its utmost as if it had no helper under heaven, but had all the work to do of itself. And let the entire body of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ—instead of looking to societies for evangelization, or to commerce, or to governments—remember that she is the sole saviour of the world. Christ never was incarnate in kings and in princes. His incarnation to-day is in the sacramental host of his elect. If you ask me where was God on earth, I point to the man Christ Jesus. If you ask me where is Christ on earth, I point you to his faithful Church, called by his Spirit. As Christ was the world's hope, so is the Church the world's hope, and she must take up the charge as if there were not another. Instead of sending some to this town and some to that, she must hear her Master say, "Give ye them to eat."

I do fear, dear friends, that we are many of us getting into a very easy state about perishing men, because we keep out of their way. To stop your ears to the cries of the hungry, or shut your eyes to the wants of the widow and the fatherless, is not the way to relieve famine. Nor is it the way of doing good in the world, to avoid the haunts of the poor, and to leave the dens of desolation and sin. It is ours to touch the leper with our healing finger, not to shrink from his presence; it is ours to go and find out the stripped, and wounded, and helpless

of the sons of men, and then to pour in the oil and the wine. Leave the priest and the Levite, if they will, to pass by on the other side. Your Master asks of you, Christian, practical, personal service, and your Christianity is worth nothing unless it makes you heed his word—"Give ye them to eat"—unless it makes you as individual members, and as an united body do God's work for the world's sake and for Jesus Christ's sake. I will tell *you*, the people of my charge, that the world's salvation is given instrumentally into your hands. As far as your power lies, you are to consider yourselves as the world's hope, and you are to act as such. And what shall I say of you if, instead of accepting this charge from Christ, you shall sit still and do nothing? If, after having built this ceiled house in which you meet, you should disregard others who hear not the Word of Christ,—if, being fed with heaven's food yourselves, ye shall be satisfied to let others perish, I tell you that, as a Church, Ichabod shall be written upon your brow. The garments of this Church shall be rent, and her veil shall be torn away from her. She shall be set as a hissing; she shall be made a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, throughout all generations, if she dare to look back now that the Master hath called her to a great and solemn work. He that putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is not worthy of the kingdom. I have faith in you, dear friends, but I have more faith in my God; I have faith in you that you will not turn back, but accept the awful charge which devolves upon you of giving light to the world. But if ye reject it, I will be a swift witness against you at the last great day, that ye knew your Master's will and that ye did it not—that ye were called to the Master's service and ye slunk back again to indolence and sloth.

II. Having thus dwelt upon our mission, and enlarged upon our weakness, it is time to turn the topic, and come to OUR LINE OF DUTY AND THE MASTER'S STRENGTH.

Our line of duty begins, first of all, in immediate obedience to Christ's first command—"Bring ye them to me." "Five loaves, Master, it is all we have; two fishes." "Bring ye them to me." In Mark, the words are used—"Go and see." They were to look in their wallets and be quite sure that they had not any more. They were to rummage among all their treasures, and bring every crust, every piece of flesh, or bread, to Christ. "Bring them to me." "Master, they are barley loaves; only five." "Bring them to me." "There are two fishes; they are only two; they are not worth thinking of; let us keep them for ourselves." "No, bring them to me." "But they are such little fishes." "Bring them to me," saith he, "bring them to me." The Church's first duty is, when she looks to her resources and feels them to be utterly insufficient for her work, still to bring all that she has to Christ. But how shall she bring them? Why, in many ways. She must bring them to Christ *in consecration*. There is a brother yonder who says, "Well, I have but little money to spare!" "Never mind," says Christ, "let what you have be brought to me." "Ah," says another, "I have very short time that I can spare in labouring to do good." "Bring it to me." "Ah," says another, "but I have small ability; my stock of knowledge is very slender; my speech is contemptible." "Bring it to me." "Oh," saith one, "I could only teach in the Sunday

school." "Bring it to me." "Ah," says another, "and I do not know that I could do that; I could but distribute a tract." "Bring it to me." Every talent that the Church has is to be brought to Christ, and consecrated. And mark you this—I speak a strong thing which some will not be able to receive—anything which you have in this world, which you do not consecrate to Christ's cause, you do rob the Lord of. Every true Christian, when he gave himself to Christ, gave everything he had. Neither calls he anything that he has his own, but it is all the Master's. We are not true to the Master's cause unless it be so. "What! not provide for our families?" Yea, verily, but that is given to God. "Not provide for ourselves?" Yea, verily, so long as ye be not covetous. Remember, it is your Master's business to provide for you. If he provides for you through your own exertions, you are doing your Master's work and receiving of his bounty, for it is his work to provide for you. But still there must always be a thorough consecration of everything you have to Christ. Where your consecration ends, your honesty with God ends. How often you have made the vow in your hymn! And will ye not be true to your covenant with him?—

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine;
Whate'er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.

"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give him all."

Bring ye them to me—not only in consecration, but also in prayer. I think our prayer-meetings should be the seasons when the Church brings up all her barley loaves and fishes to Christ. To get them blessed, here we come together, great Master, around the altar. We are weak and feeble, we come to be made strong; we have no power of ourselves, we come that we may receive power from on high; and we wait in the prayer-meeting, as thy disciples did in the upper room at Jerusalem, till the Spirit be poured out. It is marvellous how a man with one talent can sometimes do ten times more than a man with ten talents, for he has ten times the grace. A soldier, after all, is not always useful according to his weapon. Give a fool an Armstrong gun, and perhaps he will destroy himself with it. Give a wise man but the poorest piece of fire-arms, and you shall find, with good and steady aim, and bold advance, he shall do more service with his small weapons, than the other with far better arms. So there are men, who seem as if they might be leaders in God's house, that are laggards, doing nothing, while there are others who are but little in Israel, whom God through his grace makes to be mighty. Bring ye hither, O ye servants of the Lord, all that ye have kept back; pour ye all the tithes into his storehouse, that his house may be full. Prove me now, saith the Lord of hosts, if I do not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Let us bring all we have to Christ, likewise in faith, laying it all at his feet, believing that his great power can make little means suffice for mighty ends. "Lord, there are only five loaves,"—they were five loaves only when we had them in our hands, but now they are in thy hands, they are food for five thousand men. "Lord, there are two

fishes,"—they were paltry to insignificance while they were ours, but thy touch has ennobled them, and those little fishes shall become food for that vast multitude. Blessed is that man who, feeling that he has truly consecrated all to God, can say, "There is enough. I do not want more talent; I do not need more substance; I would not wish to have more, there is enough for my work; I know it is utterly insufficient in itself, but our sufficiency is of God." Oh! do not tell me, sirs, that we, as a denomination, are too feeble to do much good. Do not tell me that the Christianity of England is too weak for the evangelization of the whole world. No such thing: there is enough, there is plenty if the Master pleases it. If there were only six good men living, and these six were thoroughly consecrated to God, they would be enough for the world's conversion. It is not the multiplication of your means, it is not the complication of your machinery, it is not the organisation of your societies, it is not the qualification of your secretaries that God cares for a whit—it is your consecrated men who are wholly his and only his. Let them believe that he can make them mighty, and they shall be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. I hesitate not to say that there are some pulpits that would be better empty than occupied; that there are some congregations to whom it would be far better if they had no preacher at all; for, having a minister who is not ordained of God, and not speaking by faith, they content themselves with things as they are, and grow listless. Were the sham taken away, they might cry out for a real ministry. God would bestow on them one taught of the Holy Ghost, who would speak with a tongue of fire, with inward witness and with spiritual energy, resting his confidence in God's promises and his Word. Oh! dear friends, we ought to believe that there is enough means if Christ do but bless them, enough to bring in God's chosen ones.

"Bring ye them to me," once more, in active service. That which is dedicated to Christ in solemn covenant, and in earnest prayer, and in humble faith, must be dedicated in active service. Are you *all* at work for Christ? Members of this Church, I speak to you first: it is but incidentally that I address other believers here. Are you all doing something for Christ? I think there should not be a single member of this Church who is not somehow occupied for the Master. Shall I except any?—except the weak upon their beds; and they can speak a good word for him when they are visited: except the dying upon their couches, and they can bear a blessed testimony to his faithfulness when they are going through the river: except the dumb, and they can act religion, when they cannot speak it: except the blind, and they can sing his praises: except the utterly incapacitated, and these can magnify the Lord by their patience. Still we ought, everyone of us, if we be Christ's, to be serving him. Am I a son, and have I no duty to my father? Am I a husband, and have I no duties of kindness to the wife? Am I a servant, and shall I be idle, careless, and disobedient? Is the Christian's the only name that is merely nominal? Is this a barren title? Is this a medal to be worn? Is this a kind of cross which Christians shall take when they have done no deeds of arms, no valorous conflicts for Christ? Is the Christian only a thing, and not a living reality? The Lord have mercy upon such Christians!

Now, dear friends, if you want any inducements to lead you to bring all that you have to Christ, let me urge this. In bringing it to him, you put your talent into *his* hand, whose hand was pierced for you. You give to him who is your dearest friend; you give to him who spared not the blood of his heart that he might redeem you. Do you not love him? Is it not an honour to be permitted to show your love to so notable and noble a personage? We have heard of women that have worked, and all but starved themselves, to bring food for their children; and as they put the precious morsels into the little ones' mouths, they felt their toil to be nothing, because they were giving it to those they loved. And so with the believer—he should feel that he most blesses himself when he blesses Christ. And, indeed, when the Christian doeth ought for Jesus, it more blesses him that gives than him that takes.

Besides, when you give to him, you have another inducement, that you are thus giving to the multitude. I know people think, when they are doing something for the Church, that they are pleasing the minister, or pleasing the deacons. Oh! dear friends, it is not so. What interest have I in all the world but the love of poor souls,—that God who reads the heart shall say, at the day of judgment, there lives not one who desires more disinterestedly the salvation of this world, than the minister who addresses you now. And I trust I can speak the same of my brethren in Christ, who long to see the world brought in. Look at that hungry world, and when ye give the bread, let those eyes that stare upon you, let those who eat so abundantly thank you, and let that be a sufficient recompense for what you have done. There is a man, I think, present now, who I remember, some two or three winters ago, came to me to join the Church; and when I sat down in the room to talk to him, I saw by the look of the poor man's face he wanted bread natural as well as bread spiritual. So I said, "Before I talk to you, I should like to see you a little refreshed;" and we fetched him something to eat. I looked at him for a minute, for I saw his eyes glisten, and I left the room, for fear he should not eat so much when I was there. This though I can tell you, when I saw the great pleasure with which he ate, it would have been sufficient compensation to me if that little had cost ten thousand pounds. And when you see the poor sinner lay hold of Christ so greedily, and yet so joyfully, when you see his gleaming eye, and the tear as it runs down his cheek, you will say, I am too well paid to have done good to such a poor heart as this. Lord, it is enough, I have fed these hungry souls.

Once again, bring your loaves and fishes to Christ instead of following Christ to get loaves and fishes. Is it no inducement that you should yourself be the distributor? When we were children, and our father cut off a small piece from the joint, and sent it to a sick woman over the road, do we not recollect how Thomas, Mary, and Ann used to quarrel for turns to take the basin over with the slice of meat? We always liked to knock at the good woman's door, and say, "Please, we have brought something for your dinner to-day." Children are always glad if there is something to give away. If you put a penny into their hands, to give to a poor blind man, how cheerfully they run! Just such a feeling as that the Christian has, when out of his talent, which he has consecrated

to God, he does something for the world. He is going about among the ranks, and feeding them, and he has joy in the deed.

Then to close this point. "Bring ye them to me, and ye shall have as much left as ye had when ye brought them." They took up of the fragments more than ever they gave. Christ will never let any man die in his debt. What ye have done unto him is abundantly repaid, if not in temporals, yet in spirituals. The fragments shall fill the baskets that are so liberally emptied. You shall find that while watering others you are yourself watered. The joy you impart shall be mutual. To do good is to get good, and to distribute to others for Christ is the surest way of enriching one's self.

The rest of the believer's duty I will briefly sum up. When you have brought your talents to Christ, and have a conscientiousness of your great mission, your next duty is to look up. Thank God for what you have got: look up! Say, "There is nothing in what I do; there is nothing in my prayers, my preachings, my goings, my doings, except thou bless the whole. Lord, bless it!" Then, when you have blessed, break. Remember the multiplication never came till after the division, and the addition did not begin till the subtraction took place. So, then, begin to break, do good, and communicate. Go abroad, and actively serve the Master, and when you have thus broken and have thus distributed to others, mind that you only distribute from Christ's own hand. You are to put your talents and abilities into Christ's hand. He gives the blessing on it; then he gives back to you: afterwards, you give it to the people. If I give you bread from this pulpit to eat that is my own, it will be of no use to you. But if, having gotten it in my study, I put it in the hand of Christ, and come up here, and Christ hands it back to me, and I give it to you, you shall be fed to the full. This is Christ's way of blessing men; he does not give the blessing first to the world, it is to his disciples, and then the disciples to the multitude. We get in private what we distribute in public. We have access to God as his chosen favourites. We come near to him. He gives to us, we give to others. Thus, dear friends, I began by setting before you a great and high mission; first, I made you say, "We cannot;" then I tried to make you say, "We must." And now I want to end by making you say "We can." Yes! Christ is with us, and we can. God is for us, and we can. The Holy Ghost is in us, and we can. God the Holy Spirit calls us, Jesus Christ the Son of God cheers us, God the Father smiles upon us; we can, we must, we will. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

But have we believed in Christ ourselves? If not, we can do nothing. Come to Jesus first, then work for Jesus. Give him your own heart first, then give him all that you have. So shall he accept your offering, and bless your soul for his name's sake.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SUNSHINE IN THE HEART.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 15TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."—Psalm xxxvii. 4.

THERE are two teachings in our text which must be very surprising to those who are strangers to vital godliness; to sincere believers these marvels are recognised facts, but to the outside world they will appear passing strange. We have here, first of all, the life of a believer described as a *delight* in God; and thus we are certified of the great truth that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon religion as a joyful thing, to them it is service, duty, or necessity, but never pleasure and delight. Wherefore go they up to the house of God? Is it not because of custom—a custom which they would fain avoid if they dare? Wherefore do they attend to the ordinances of the Church? Is it not either out of Pharisaic hope of merit, or from a superstitious dread? How many view the forms of religion as charms to avert ill, or as lesser evils by which they escape from dreaded judgment? What is their service but drudgery, and their worship but weariness? Ask ye the worldlings what they think of religion,—and even when they practise its outward rites they snuff at it as a dull and dreary thing. "What a weariness it is!" They love it as much as the ass loves labour, or the horse the whip, or the prisoner the treadmill. They cry for short sermons; indeed, none at all would suit them better. How cheerfully would they clip the hours of Sunday; indeed, if Sabbaths only came but once in the month, they would prefer it. The heavy necessity of pious customs weighs upon them as tribute upon a conquered province. They pay to religion an observance of the character of a tax or toll which custom demands; but free will offerings they know not, and loving enjoyment of hallowed fellowship they cannot understand. They serve God as Cain did, who brought his offering it is true, but brought it late; brought it because it was the family custom, and he would not be outdone by his brother; brought it of the common fruit of the ground, and with a sullen, loveless heart. These Cainites bring such as they are forced to bring, and mingle no faith in Jesus' blood with their offerings; they come with leaden heels to the house of God, and they go away as if they

had feathers to their feet; they serve God, but it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand farther apart than "holiness" and "delight." Ah, but believers who know Christ, understand that delight and faith are so blessedly married, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to divorce them. They who love God with all their hearts, find that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. Such joy, such brimful delights, such overflowing bliss, do the saints discover in their Lord, that so far from serving him from custom, they would follow him should all the world cast out his name as evil. We fear not God because of any compulsion, our faith is no fetter, our profession is no prison; we are not dragged to holiness, nor driven to duty. No, sirs, our religion is our recreation, our hope is our happiness, our duty is our delight.

I know it always will be a calumny against Christ's religion that it makes men miserable; but a greater misapprehension, or a baser falsehood, never cursed the world. Because we cannot trifle so foolishly, nor sin so boldly, nor brag so lustily as the servants of sin, therefore ye think us miserable! Ah, sirs, it is well written, "A stranger intermeddleth not with our joy." The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and their joy no man taketh from them. Let us remind you, however, that still waters run the deepest. The rill which rattles o'er the stones dries up in the summer; but the deep-flowing river speeds on, come drought or heat, and yet glideth silently along the meads. We do not talk so loudly of our joys as you of your merriments, because we have no need to do so; ours are known as well in silence as in exciting company. We need not your society to make us glad, much less the varied accompaniments which prop your bliss; we need neither bowl, nor feast, nor viol, nor dance, to make us glad: nor even the stalled ox, and the bursting winefat to make us rich. Our happiness lies not on passing creatures, but in the eternal, immutable Creator. I know, despite all we shall say, this slander will survive from generation to generation: that God's people are a wretched people. But, at least, let us clear our conscience of you, and let us make you without excuse if you believe it again. We *do* have joy; we *do* have delights, such that we would not part with one dram of ours for tons of yours; not drops of our joy for rivers of your delights. Ours are no tinsel or painted joys, but solid realities; ours are joys that we can take with us to our bed in the silent dust—joys that shall sleep with us in the tomb, and that shall awake with us in eternity—joys that we can look back upon and so live them o'er again in retrospect—joys that we can anticipate and so know both here and hereafter. Ours are not bubbles which only glitter to burst; ours are not apples of Sodom, turning to ashes in our hand; our delights are substantial, real, true, solid, lasting, everlasting! What more shall I say? Dismiss from your minds this mistake. Delight and true religion are as allied as root and flower, as indivisible as truth and certainty; they are, in fact, two precious jewels set side-by-side in the same socket of gold.

But there is another wonder in our text to wordly men, though it is a wonder well understood by Christians. The text says, "He shall give

thee the desires of thine heart." "Why," the worldly man says, "I thought religion was all self-denial; I never imagined that in loving God we could have our desires; I thought that godliness consisted in killing, destroying, and keeping back our desires." Does not the religion of most men consist in an open abstinence from sins which they secretly love? Negative godliness is very common in this age. It is supposed by most men that our religion consists in things which we must not do, rather than in pleasures which we may enjoy. We must not go to a theatre; we must not sing songs, trade on Sundays, use ill words, and so on; we must not do this, and we must not do that. And they suppose us to be a crabbed, miserable race of persons who, no doubt, make up by some private allowance for denying ourselves in public. Now, it is true that religion is self-denial; it is equally true that it is not self-denial. Christian men have two selves; there is the old self, and therein they do deny the flesh with its affections and lusts; but there is a new self; there is a new-born spirit, the new man in Christ Jesus; and, brethren, our religion does not consist in any self-denial of that. No, let it have the full swing of its wishes and desires; for all that it can wish for, all that it can pant after, all that it can long to enjoy, it may most safely obtain. When I hear persons say, "Well, you know my religion consists in some things that I must do, and in some things that I must not do," I reply, "Mine consists in things that I love to do, and in avoiding things that I hate and would scorn to do." I feel no chain in my religion, for I am free, and never man more free. He who fears God and is wholly God's servant, has no chains about him. He may live as he lists, for he lists to live as he ought. He may have his full desires, for his desires are holy, heavenly, divine. He may take the full range of the utmost capacity of his wishes and desires, and have all he wants and all he wishes, for God has given him the promise and God will give him the fulfilment of it.

But do not go away with the idea that we are always afraid to put one foot before the other, because there is some *must not* in our way; and that we do not go that way to the right or that way to the left because we dare not. Oh, sirs, we would not if we might; we would not if the law were altered, we would not have your pleasures if we might. If we could go to heaven and live as sinners live, we would not choose their way and conversation. It would be a hell to us to be compelled to sin, even if sin could go unpunished. If we could have your drunkenness, if we could have your lusts—oh, ye ungodly ones—if we could have your mirth and your joy, we would not have them. We do not deny ourselves when we give these up. We despise your mirth, we abominate it, and tread it beneath our feet. "I can't understand," once said a bird to a fish, "how it is that you always live in the cold element; I could not live there. It must be a great self-denial to you not to fly up to the trees. See how I can mount aloft." "Ah," said the fish, "it is no self-denial to me to live here, it is my element; I never aspire to fly, for it would not suit me. If I were taken out of my element I should die unless I was restored to it very soon, and the sooner the better." So the believer feels that God is his native element. He does not escape from his God, or from his Master's will and service; and if

for a time he were taken out of it, the sooner he could get back to it the better. If he is thrown into bad company he is miserable and wretched until he gets out of it again. Does the dove deny itself when it does not eat carrion? No, verily the dove could not delight in blood, it would not feed thereon if it could. When a man sees a company of swine under the oak delighting themselves in their acorns, and grunting out their satisfaction—does he deny himself when he passes them by without sharing their feast? No, verily, he has better bread at home whereof he can eat, and swines' meat is no dainty to him. So it is with the believer; his religion is a matter of delight, a matter of satisfaction; and that which he avoids and turns from is very little self-denial to him. His tastes are changed, his wishes are altered. He delights himself in his God, and joyously receives the desire of his heart.

This by way of preface. Now to come to our text itself. There are two things in the text very plainly. The first is *a precept written upon sparkling jewels*, "Delight thyself in the Lord." The second is *a promise priceless beyond rubies*, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

I. The first is A PRECEPT WRITTEN UPON SPARKLING JEWELS. I have added those last words, because the law of the ten commands was written upon stone—perhaps hard granite, in which men could take but little delight. But this law of one command, "Delight thyself in the Lord" is no stony law to be written upon tablets of granite, but it contains a precept for sparkling brightness, worthy to be written on amethysts and pearls. "Delight thyself in the Lord." Why, brethren, when delight becomes a duty, then certainly duty is a delight. When it becomes my duty to be happy, when I have an express command to be glad, then indeed I must be a sinner if I refuse my own joys, and turn aside from my own bliss. Oh, what a God we have, who has made it our duty to be happy! What a gracious God, who accounts no obedience to be so worthy of his acceptance as a gladsome obedience rendered by a joyous heart. "Delight thyself in the Lord."

1. Now, first, *What is this delight.* I have been thinking the word "delight" over, and I cannot explain it. You know it is a word by itself. A delightful word—I cannot use anything but its own self to describe it. If you look at it—it is flashing with *light*, it sparkles like a a star, nay, like a bright constellation, radiant with sweet influences like the Pleiades. It is joy, yet is it more, it is joy running over; it is rest, but such a rest as allows of the utmost activity of every passion of the soul. Delight! it is mirth without its froth. Delight! it is peace, yet it is more than that: it is peace celebrated with festivity, with all the streamers hanging in the streets and all the music playing in the soul. Delight! whereunto shall I compare it? It is a stray word that belongs to the language of Paradise, and when the holy words of Eden flew away to heaven at the fall, this one being entangled in the silken meshes of the net of the first promise, was retained on earth to sing in believers' ears. Where shall I find metaphors to set it out. Man fails me, let me turn then to the unsinning creatures of God. Go to the sea-side when the sea is going down, and in some parts of the coast you will see a little fringe just at the edge of the wave. It looks like a mist, but on closer examination you will find there are millions of very small shrimps,

faithfulness with which he attends you, and in the certainty that he will ultimately perfect you, that you may be meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And here we might branch out into a thousand themes. Delight yourselves in God as your father, as your friend, as your helper. Delight yourselves in Jesus Christ as your brother, as your bridegroom, as your shepherd, as your all in all. Delight yourselves in Christ in all his offices, as prophet, priest, and king. Triumph in him, in all his garments, for they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Delight yourselves in Christ, in his glory and in his humiliation, in his cross and in his crown, in his manger and in his eternal triumph, wherein he led captivity captive. Delight yourselves in the Holy Spirit, in all his various dealings with men's minds. Delight in Pentecost, and in Pentecosts that are yet to come. And—but we close. What more should we say? Surely we might talk on for ever. Delight thyself in Jehovah, that great, that boundless, that joyful theme, and delight thyself in him for evermore.

3. Now another question suggests itself. *When is this delight to be practised?* "Delight thyself in the Lord." Precepts without limit as to time are for perpetual observance. My text does not say, "Delight thyself in the Lord occasionally, and now and then," but at all times. There are two occasions when it is hard to delight in God, and therefore I will mention these. It is hard to delight in God when everything goes well with us. "Oh," I hear you say, "I cannot understand that; that is the time when I do delight in God most." Brother, I am afraid it is the time when you delight *in God* least. "Well, but when my comforts are round about me, when providence smiles upon me, then I can delight in God." Stop! are you sure of that? Is it not likely that often you are delighting in his mercies rather than in *Him?* delighting in the creature rather than in the Creator? I fear, brethren, it is our sunshiny days that are the greatest times of temptation. Well may we pray, "In all time of our wealth deliver us." We are somewhat like a foolish wife who, when her husband giveth her jewels and rings, groweth apt to love the jewels rather than her husband. Many believers we have known who have had graces and mercies, and have had great privileges, and they have come to pride themselves more in the mercies and the privileges than in their God. It is hard when the wine-vat is full to love God more than the vineyard; it is hard when there is a fine harvest to think more of God than of the sheaves; it is hard when you are growing rich still to say "this is not my treasure." The treasures of earth will besmear our garments unless we see well to our hearts: our soul cleaveth to the dust, and dust is no aid to devotion Oh, take heed, rich believer, that thou delight thyself in God; not in thy parks and thy lawns, thy gardens and thy houses, thy lands and thy estates; for if thou delight in these, thy gold and thy silver are cankered, and the moth is in thy garment, and the blight will soon be on thy heritage. Say, "These are not my portion." "God is my portion saith my soul."

Another time when it is hard to delight in God—not so hard as in this first one—is when everything goes ill with us. Then we are apt to say with old Jacob, "All these things are against me." What a noble opportunity Job lost, when servant after servant came to tell him that

everything was gone, when he sat on the dunghill and did scrape himself with a potsherd. If he could have stood upright and have said, "Now will I rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the God of my salvation," what a triumph of faith would he have achieved. If he could have thus played the man for God, Job would have been the most splendid character that we have in Holy Scripture. He did go far when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." There spoke a man whom God had made mighty. But if he could have delighted still more in God when the sores were on him and the blains were bursting, that would have been all but superhuman. I think I may say it would have been as much as even grace itself could work in man. Yet how often have I noticed that believers do rejoice in God much more readily in their afflictions than they do in their prosperity. I have seen the hyssop growing upon Lebanon, and I have seen the cedar growing on the wall. I have seen great saints where there was little mercy; and I have seen drivelling saints where there were great providential blessings. God's birds sing best in cages, and the praise of God comes better out of the mouth of the furnace of affliction than even from the top of the mountain of communion. We are so constituted, it seems to me, that unless God screws the strings of our heart up by pain and affliction, we never give forth much sweet music to him. Yet is it hard, very hard, for a man, when every earthly prop gives way, to say, the fig tree does not blossom, the calves perish from the stall, the harvest has been mildewed, the cankerworm eateth up all the produce; but still my delight is in God, and my triumph is in the God of my salvation. Yet, by grace, at all times we are to delight in God.

But I hear a voice say, "But when is the Christian to be miserable?" Never, brother, never! "But not at times?" No; not if he does his duty. "But ought not a saint sometimes to be cast down?" Saints are cast down, but they ought not to be. "Well, but many of God's saints are full of doubts and fears." I know they are, and the more's the pity. "But some of the Lord's children go mourning all their days." It is their own fault, their Lord has not bidden them do so. The Scriptures teacheth us "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again," saith the Apostle, "I say rejoice." "But are there not times when we may indulge the melancholy vein, and cultivate sorrow?" Well, if you do you will soon find it grow. God often serves his children as I have known parents do theirs; if his children pray for afflictions they shall have them until they shall begin to pray ten times more earnestly to have them taken away. If God's people cry for nothing they shall soon have something to cry for. If they will make themselve miserable they will soon have miseries added to their miseries. But so far as the promise is concerned, and the precept is concerned, it is the daily, constant, hourly duty and business of the true believer to delight himself in the Lord his God.

4. But before I leave this point, I answer one other question. *Why is this delighting in God so rare?* Why do you see so many desponding Christians? so many doubting Christians? Why do you see so many whose religion seems to them to be a yoke, a very heavy yoke too? It is, I fear, because there is so little on the one hand of genuine religion, and so little on the other of deep-toned religion where the little that

there is is genuine. Why, the man who has a religion that is not of his heart, I do not wonder that he is wretched. You have seen sometimes a man with a dog of a breed that does not like the water, and he throws it in; how quickly it gets out again. But there are some of a different breed, that will swim by the hour, and delight in it. So, now, there are some professors who are known to be hypocrites by the fact that their religion is against their will. You have put them into it, and they soon get out again. But the true Christian takes to his religion by grace with ardour and delight. He loves it, he delights therein. This is one of the best tests to discern between a hypocrite and a true Christian. Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in God?" No; the hypocrite will pull a long face; the hypocrite will look wretched; the hypocrite will make himself as miserable as ever man can be when the time has come for it; but he never *did*, and he never *can*, and he never *will* delight himself in God as a rule. He may have some joy in the outward means, for even Herod heard John gladly. But that is only a spasm. Only the true believer can have a constant and an abiding satisfaction and delight in the service and love of God. This is an evidence so sure and infallible, that if any among you delight in God, I conclude, without hesitation, that you are a saved soul. But if any of you, on the other hand, never have any delight in God of any kind, I question whether you ever knew God at all, for if you have known him you must in your degree have found delight in him. "But what is the good of this delight?" saith one. "Why should Christians be such a happy people?" Why, it is good in all ways. It is good for our God; it gives him honour among the sons of men when we are glad. It is good for us; it makes us strong. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." It is good for the ungodly; for when they see Christians glad, they long to be believers themselves. It is good for our fellow Christians; it comforts them and tends to cheer them. Whereas, if we look gloomy we shall spread the disease, and others will be wretched and gloomy too. For all these reasons, and for many more that can be given, it is a good and pleasant thing that a believer should delight himsel in God.

II. I now turn to the second point of the subject, briefly. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." HERE IS A PROMISE PRICELESS BEYOND RUBIES. What connection is there between the first part of the text and the second—"Delight thyself in the Lord," and, "He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." There is this connection, they who delight in God are qualified to have the promise fulfilled. They are qualified, in the first place, as to the desires. It would not be a safe thing for God to give to every one of you here the desire of your heart; it would be your ruin. One of the best things that the Lord does for some men is to check them and thwart them. There is many a man that has gone to heaven through not having had his desires who would have gone to hell if he had had them. Ungodly men have desires that would lead them to the pit, and when God refuses to give them their desires, it is as though he had put chains, and posts, and barriers in the road to keep them from going post-haste to their own destruction. The ungodly man is not qualified to have the promise,

because he would desire something that would neither glorify God nor profit himself. But when a man's delight is in God, then his desires are of such a sort that God may be glorified in the granting of them, and the man himself profited by the receiving of them. Again, delighting in God qualifies the believer not only for desiring aright, but for spending aright: for some men, if they had their heart's desire, and it were a good desire, would nevertheless make a wrong use of it, and so it would happen to them as it did to Israel of old, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God would come upon them; but he that delights in God, whatever he gets, knows how to use it well. People say *use* is a second nature. Brethren, abuse is the first nature. To abuse mercies is much more the nature of man than to properly use them, but when the believer delights in God, whatever he has from God he spends aright: he makes it not a sacrifice to himself, much less a God before whom he will bow down and worship; but he makes it a means of serving God better, and delighting himself in the Master the more. The rivers of worldly men run away from the sea; but the rivers that Christian men have, run into the sea. If a worldly man sails along the stream of his mercies, he gets further and further from God, and becomes more and more an idolator. But when the Christian gets mercies he sails nearer and nearer to his God; and so his mercies become highways to the throne of God himself.

"Still," says one, "what are those desires which we are sure to receive?" Now, brethren, we must single out those who delight themselves in God, and I believe the range of their desires will be found in a very short compass. If I had my desire of my God this morning, it is not much for me to say I have no earthly thing that I would desire, "for I have all things and abound." But if the Apostle Paul were here, who had nothing, who was often naked and poor and miserable, I am persuaded if he had his wish, he would say, "I have nothing to wish for, nothing upon earth, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." But if I must have a wish, brethren, I know what I would wish for. I would wish to be perfect, to be free from every sin, from every imperfection, from all self, from all temptation, from all love of the world, from all care for everything or anything that is contrary to God's Word. Is not that your wish, you that delight in God? Would you not, now, if an angel were to stand before you at the pew door, would you not say, "If I may, let me be perfectly set free from the very name, and nature, guilt, and power of sin." You shall have your desire, the Lord shall give unto you the desire of your heart. But I hear another say, "If I might have my desire it would be that I might live nearer to Christ; that I might have constant communion with him till I knew him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death." Brother, I join you in that desire. I am sure if you had ten kingdoms offered in the one hand and this fellowship with Christ in the other, do not I speak the desire of your heart when I say you would choose to have communion with Christ rather than these kingdoms. Well, the Lord shall give you the desire of your heart. Only delight thyself in the Lord. "Well," says another, "if I might have my desire I would have all these things, but I would desire to be

useful always." Ah, to be useful! How many men live like Belzoni's toad in the pyramids of Egypt, which had been there two thousand years; and what had it done but sometimes sleep and sometimes wake the whole time through. And so some men live and do nothing. "But if I had my desire," I think I hear many of you say, "I should like to be useful; to win crowns for Christ, to save souls for him, to bring in his lost sheep." Brother, delight thyself in the Lord, thou shall have thy desire. Perhaps not exactly as you would like to word it. You may not be useful in the sphere you aspire to, but you shall be useful as God would have you useful in his own way and in his own measure.

I must say one thing though. I have a desire which if now I might offer it knowing that it should be granted me, it would be this: I desire to see you all converted. Mothers and fathers can you not say, "My heart's desire is that my children might be saved, for I have no greater joy than this that my children walk in the truth." And I as a minister say, my earnest desire, the highest desire I know, that which my soul feels most when it pants the most and aspires the most after some big and great thing, is that I may present every man of you perfect before God at the last; that I may not only be clear of your blood which is a great thing, but that I may have you with me, when I shall say, "Here am I, Lord, and the children thou hast given me for Christ." Oh, you who are members of this Church, will you pray that your minister may delight himself in God, that he may have this desire of his heart. And will you yourselves also delight in God, so that when you come to God in prayer, and pray for this congregation, you may be sure he will give you the desire of your heart, because you have delighted yourselves in him. They said of Martin Luther as he walked the streets, "There comes a man that can have anything of God he likes." You ask the reason of it. Because Luther delighted himself in his God. Give us some such men in this congregation and in this Church who love the Lord and rejoice in him, what an effect their prayers will have. These are the men who have the keys of heaven, and of death, and of hell. These are the men that can open heaven or shut it up, that it rain or rain not. The Church of Rome pretends that she has the keys; but the Church of Christ has the keys without pretending to have them, and these keys swing at the girdles of the men who delight in God. You can by your prayers bring down such showers of the Spirit upon the Christian Church, that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; and if you cease to delight in God you can shut up heaven itself, so that no rain descends, and the whole Church becomes barren and unfruitful once again.

Now to wind up. Mark this, this is the only thing that a man can delight in and get his desires. There is a man that delights in money, but he does not get his desire. He gets his money, but he never gets the satisfaction he expected. We read in the papers but the other day of one who had a singular success in his profession, but who lately attempted suicide under the notion that he should lose his all through the American war. We remember in this great city one of the largest merchants who died worth more than three millions of money, for at that amount I think his property was sworn, who during the latter part of his life

was accustomed to be paid the same wages as his gardener, and believed that he should certainly die in a workhouse. He had got his broad and wide estates, and money that could not be told, but he did not get the desire of his heart. He had delighted in his gold, and he had not the desire of his heart. So have we known men that have delighted themselves in fame, and when they have got it they would have been only too glad to get rid of it. They have been great statesmen or mighty warriors, and they have been greatly renowned; but when they have gained all the fame and stood on the very top of the pinnacle, there was not that in it that they expected, and they have said, "Would that I had lived in obscurity, for then I might have known some satisfaction." And look at many of you. When you were apprentices, the desire of your heart was to be journeymen. Well, when you became journeymen, what then? You wanted to be masters, and set up in trade for yourselves. Well, you have set up in trade and got on pretty well. Have you the desire of your heart? Oh, no; that has gone on a little further. Now, you are waiting till you have brought up this large family of yours, and then when you have your children started in life, you are looking out for a villa in the suburbs where you can retire and spend the rest of your days. And some of you have the villa in the country, and have wound up your business affairs. Have you the desire of your heart yet? Well, not quite yet. There is still something else that you want. Ah, yes—getting the desire of a man's heart is like chasing a phantom. It is here—there—and everywhere; now on the hill, now down in the valley; you leap down on it, and it is away again on the next hill, and then on the next, and you find your chase is fruitless. Satisfaction in this world is like the diamond which the fool sees lying at the foot of the rainbow. So he runs after it, and as he runs the rainbow is ever in the distance, and he can never find what he expected. But if you would have the desire of your heart delight in your God, give him your love; give him your heart. Plunge deep into this stream, and you shall have all that you can wish for; the desire of your heart to the full extent shall be granted.

Are there not in this house to-day those who cannot delight in God?—cannot—cannot—cannot? "How," say you, "can I delight in God? he is angry with me." You are right, you cannot. How can *he* delight in God whose sins are unforgiven, upon whom the wrath of God abideth always? Can a man delight in a roaring lion, or in a bear robbed of her whelps? Can a man delight in a consuming fire? Can a man delight in a naked sword that seeks to reach his very heart? Yet God is such to you so long as you are out of grace. How then can you delight in God? There is one step that is necessary: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you shall delight in the Lord. That is, trust yourself to be saved by Christ. Go and put yourself into Christ's hands to have all your sins put away, and when you have trusted Christ you shall know that your sin is forgiven, that you are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and you may go your way and delight yourself in God, for the promise is this, your desire shall be granted you.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"THE LOVE OF JESUS, WHAT IT IS—
NONE BUT HIS LOVED ONES KNOW."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 18TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.

"And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."—Ephesians iii. 19.

IT is the distinguishing mark of God's people that they know the love of Christ. Without exception all those who have passed from death unto life, whatever they may not know, have learned this. Without exception, all those who are not saved, whatever they may know besides, know nothing of this. An ungodly man may know something about Christ's love; he may believe in the fact of it; he may perceive something of the theory of it. He may even be able to follow believers in certain expressions of its enjoyments. But to know the love itself, to taste its sweets, to realise personally, experimentally, and vitally, the love of Christ as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is the privilege of the child of God, and of the child of God alone. This is the secure enclosure into which the stranger cannot enter. This is the garden of the Lord, so well protected by walls and hedges that no wild boar of the wood can enter. Only the redeemed of the Lord shall walk here. They, and only they, may pluck the fruits and content themselves with the delights thereof. We may begin the exercises of this evening with a question of self-examination, and we may continue them throughout the whole service, trying to press that question home to your consciences—Do I know the love of Christ? Have I felt it? Do I understand it? Do I feel it now? Is it now shed abroad in my heart? Do I know that Jesus now loves me? Is my heart quickened, and animated, and warmed, and attracted towards him through the great truth that it recognises and rejoices in, that Christ has really loved me and chosen me, and set his heart upon me?

We have started the first point. Every child of God knows the love of Christ. We advance another step. All the children of God do not know this love to the same extent. There are in Christ's family, babes, young men, strong men, and a few who are fathers. Now, as they grow and progress in all other matters, so they most certainly make advances

here. Indeed, an increase of love, a more perfect apprehension of Christ's love is one of the best and most infallible gauges whereby we may test ourselves whether we have grown in grace or not. If we have grown in grace, it is absolutely certain that we shall have advanced in our knowledge and reciprocation of the love of Christ. Many here present have believed in Jesus, and they do know the love of Jesus. But oh! they know it not as some others here do who have gone into the inner chamber, and have been made to drink of the spiced wine of Christ's pomegranate. Some of you have begun to climb the mountain, and the view which lies at your feet is lovely and passing fair, but the landscape is not such as would greet your eyes if ye could but stand where advanced saints are standing now, and could look to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south, and see all the lengths and breadths, and depths and heights, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. To change the figure: the love of Christ is comparable to Jacob's ladder; some of us are standing on the lower rounds, and there are others who are ascending and who rest half way; others still are getting up so high that we can scarce see them by reason of the dimness of our sight; and there are some, perhaps, at this hour, who have just reached the topmost round of this knowledge, and are now stepping as it were into the arms of Christ who awaits them at the top; they have attained unto their perfection. Here they shall find repose. They shall rest in his love, and with the eternal songs of heaven they shall rejoice for ever and for ever.

I want to-night, to bring you who are the people of God to the bottom of the ladder; encourage you to put your feet upon the first round of it; and then go step by step with you, till, I hope, before we have done, if God the Holy Ghost be with us here, we shall have gotten very high up that ladder, and shall go away hoping never to come down again, only wishing, with Peter, that we may tarry in the mount, and build for us tabernacles that we may sit on the mountain-summit with our Lord for ever.

I. Well then, to come first of all to the bottom of the ladder. One of the lowest ways of knowing the love of Christ may be described as *the doctrinal method*—a very useful one, but nothing to be compared to those that we shall have to mention afterwards. If a man would know the love of Christ, he should endeavour to study the Word of God with care, attention, constancy, and with dependance upon the Spirit's illumination that he may be enabled to understand aright. It is well for a Christian man to be thoroughly established in the faith once delivered to the saints. It is an ill day for a man when he ceases to hold fast to the form of sound words which was delivered to us by Christ himself and his holy Apostles. Depend upon it, doctrinal ignorance will always make Churches weak; but where saints are fed upon the finest of the wheat, and are made to suck of the honey out of the rock, and to eat of the manna and fatness of Gospel doctrine, they will, all other things being equal, become the strongest and most valiant believers on the face of the earth. There is a tendency in these times to depreciate the value of Gospel doctrines. Oh! I beseech you, be not led astray of this error. There are in the Word of God certain things really taught. Do not believe that

the Bible is a lump of wax to be shaped just as you please. Do not imagine that "Yes" is right, and that the "No" which contradicts it is right too. The Lord has written this Book intending to teach us something, and a moderate understanding, sanctified by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, will enable you to know what the Lord does mean to teach you, especially upon such a vital point as this. Do not, I beseech you, say, "Oh, it does not much matter what doctrines I hold." You are as much responsible for using your judgment as you are for using your hands and your feet. God never did yet free conscience from his jurisdiction. Conscience is free, but not before God. You have a right to your convictions as far as I am concerned, but if your convictions be wrong, you have no right to them before God. There are certain things that are truths, and there are others that are contradictions thereunto; see that ye get fast hold on wisdom, and that ye do not let her go. There is a tendency, however, on the other hand in certain quarters, to make doctrinal knowledge everything. I have seen, to my inexpressible grief, the doctrines of grace made a huge stone to be rolled at the mouth of the sepulchre of a dead Christ, and I have seen sound doctrine, so called, made as a very seal to seal in the dead Christ, lest by any means the energy of his grace should come out for the salvation of sinners. Oh, what is doctrine after all but a throne whereon Christ sitteth, and when that throne is vacant what is the throne to us? It is the monarch and not the throne that we reverence and esteem. Doctrines are but as the shovel and the tongs of the altar, while Christ is the sacrifice smoking thereon. Doctrines are Christ's garments; verily they all smell of myrrh, and cassia, and aloes out of the ivory palaces, whereby they make us glad, but it is not the garments we care for so much as for the person, the very person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, while I intreat you, (and I hope not to be misunderstood here,) while I intreat you to be very jealous and earnest in attaining unto a clear doctrinal knowledge of the love of Christ to his people, yet when you have got it, say not—"I am the man! I have attained to eminence; I may now sit still and be content." Sirs, this is but the threshold. This is but one of the first arches of a long vista of glorious truths. This is but the lowest step of the ascent. You have but sat down on the lowest form in the school. You have much to learn yet; oh! be not wise in your own conceits, lest you loose the blessed things which as yet have not been discovered by you. Verily it is a sweet thing to know Christ's love in the doctrine, and to understand that it is without beginning; that it existed when as yet this world had not been made; when sun and moon and stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn-cup; when as yet the solemnity of silence had never been startled by the song of seraph, and the wing of cherub had never stirred the unnavigated ether! It is delightful to believe that

> "Before the day-star knew its place,
> Or planets went their round,
> The saints in bonds of sovereign grace,
> Were one with Jesus found."

Equally precious is it to know the doctrine that this love is without end.

When all we see around us shall have passed away, as the foam dissolves into the waves that bear it, the love of Christ to his people shall be the same still. And on, and on, and on throughout eternity he shall never cast them from his heart. Sweet, too, is it, passing sweet, to know that he loves them without change, and without limit; that he loves them because he will love them; that he loves them not for anything in them, but simply because he has so much love in his heart that he must let it out, and that he ordains to let it flow forth to them that they may rejoice therein. All this is precious, but O brothers and sisters, if you only know these things as they stand in the creed-book—if you only understand them as you find them in the catechism, I tell you that ye know nothing yet as ye ought to know. If this be all your knowledge, ye have to begin to learn. If you have begun at all, may God help you to go further, and to mount to higher and clearer regions than these. It is a blessed privilege to know Christ doctrinally, but it is only the beginning, the stepping-stone to something better, even as love longs for intimacy.

II. And what next? Let us lift our feet and take another step. True saints know Christ's love *gratefully and thankfully*, having experienced it. O dear friends! let me refresh your memories, and tell you what you do know, rather than attempt to say anything which might be new to you. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus met with you? Some of us do. Oh! that day of days; that first day of our spiritual life! Other days have lost their freshness in our recollection, but this one is like a coin newly minted from time, though it is years ago with some of us. Oh, that day! that marriage-day! that feast day! that day of heaven on earth! Our soul was burdened and bowed down to the very dust, and we thought we should soon descend into the pit where despair would be our portion for ever, but as we went mourning on our way, we heard a voice saying to us

"Come hither soul, I am the way."

We turned our eyes to see what way this could be, when lo, we saw one nailed to a cross. We marked the blood as it flowed from his hands and feet, and side; we saw his eyes as they looked on us with inexpressible compassion; and we heard him as he opened his lips and said, "Come unto me, thou weary one, and I will give thee rest." Oh! do you remember when you looked unto him, and when you came to trust him, just as you were, with your soul? You had been learning about Christ, perhaps, for years. You had been taught about him. You had got some knowledge of him, and some desire towards him. But did you not learn more of Christ in one five minutes then, than you could have learned in a whole course of college education in theology, in years before? And since that time, dear friends, have we not learned Christ's love thankfully to a very high degree? Day after day he cometh to us. Night after night he draweth the curtains of our bed. He is ever with us, and all that he has is ours. He talketh sweetly to us by the way, and he sitteth down by us in our afflictions, and comforteth us, and maketh our hearts to burn within us; and as we think of all that he has done for us, we feel we do know something of him, for gratitude has been our school-

master. I know some Christians say they do not feel the love of Christ so much now as they did at first. Oh! shame on you, brethren, shame on you, if this is true! What, when you owed him for one mercy did you love him, and now when you owe him for fifty thousand do you love him less? Why, if it be true that saints grow necessarily colder and colder, then it does not say much for their estimation of Christ. It would make him out to be like some people we know, who are very agreeable to see once on a time, but we should not like to live with them long. Let me bear my witness that my Lord and Master improves upon acquaintance; the more I know of him the more I wish to know; and I think I do but speak the mind of all the Lord's people, when I declare that instead of having less love to him, the more I experience of his favour, the more warm is my heart towards him. "Alas!" says one, "but I do not feel as I once did." Well, dear friend, it may be that you make some mistake in reference to your own experience. When the passion of love was first lighted in your breast, there was, as it were, a blaze of the match, the paper, and the wood, although the coals had not yet ignited. Thine was then the flush of joy, but not the vehement heat. Now thy heart is all on fire like a solid ruby. There is much more heat, though there is less blaze. So it is with some young converts. The first love they have is wild-fire, and, to tell you the truth, I would rather have wild-fire than no fire at all. But as men grow older in grace, the fire will not diminish in intensity, if God has kindled it; but perhaps the flash and the flame, the glitter and the noise, may not be quite so palpable. Yet I fear that if you do not love Christ better than you did; if you do not feel that there are new tendrils which bind you to him; if you do not feel that it would be harder now than ever to give up your hold on the Saviour, you have not begun to learn the love of Christ. When we know that love, when we feel gratitude for mercies received, then we see every mercy, both temporal and spiritual, coming from that love. Ungrateful souls cannot learn this love. They have the book of mercy, but they are blind and cannot read it. Grateful souls, in every letter from Jesus their absent friend, whom having not seen they love, and in every book of daily fellowship and of daily mercy, read again that glittering sentence—"He loved me, and gave himself for me."

III. Let us pass on to the third step, we have not got far yet. We are only as schoolboys at our first school, and we have now to go on to something higher. The true children of God know Christ's love in a way which I can only describe by the word *practically*. If any man would know his doctrine, let him keep his commandment. You know if a man is to be taught to swim, you could not teach him in Surrey Chapel. You might get the most skilful master in the world, who should come and explain the way in which he should spread his hands and move his feet, but he never can be taught to swim on dry land. And we cannot make Christians know Christ except by imitating Christ, and by obeying Christ. When soldiers are wanted, the best place to make them is, doubtless, the battle-field. If we would have veterans, there must be the smoke and the smell of powder, for great commanders are not to be manufactured in Hyde Park. And we cannot expect to have men who shall win victories, drawn out from mere loungers at the clubs; they

must attend the drill, and by practise become qualified for their duties. A young man cannot learn farming by the study of books. To read books may be useful, if he take them as companions to the great book of nature. But he must be put apprentice to some farmer, who sends him out into the fields to see how they plough, how they sow, how they mow, how they reap, and how they house their corn. By entering practically into the various toils and duties, he becomes skilled therein. Just so, if we would learn Christ, we must be practically engaged in his service. We must learn his love by keeping his commandments. You may sit in these pews and be preached to every Sabbath-day; you may hear God's truth plainly and simply unfolded; but if you want to learn, and learn in such a way that you never will forget, it is the back-streets that must teach you, the lodging-houses, the haunts of poverty, and the dens of vice. If any man would know the love of Christ, let him go where Christ went, and to the place where a Saviour is needed; let him carry Christ's light to give light to others, and it shall enlighten himself; let him go forth to water other men's vineyards, and his own soul shall be watered also. Whatsoever his Master bids him do, let him do it, and he shall learn his Master's will while he is doing his Master's will. But when men at the very outset make a profession of religion, and then disobey Christ—when they refuse to keep his commandments—when they say of this one, "It is non-essential," and of the next, "It is unnecessary," and of some duty, "Well, I can leave that to others," and of some sphere of action for which they are specially adapted, "I need not attend to that; others can do that quite as well,"—when men, I say, enlist into Christ's army, and begin at once to refuse to march as they are told, and decline to go out to batle when the captain gives them the command, it is a sure sign that they never will learn much of their Master, their Captain, and their Lord. If you had asked Whitfield in his day, how he came to know so much about Christ's love, I think he would have said that he learned more of it when he stood in Moorfields, or on Kennington Common, when the dead cats and filth were thrown at him as he preached Christ, than he ever learned in his bedchamber, or even in his closet. If you had asked Rowland Hill how it was that he had learned so much of the love of Christ, I think he would have told you that he learned it while he was speaking to the poor and to the needy, and while he was condescending to men of low estate, that by any means he might win some. Why, if a man should want to know about slavery, he might go and hear a lecture by an escaped slave, and it would be very well for him to do so; but if he could go to the place where the whip is cracking, and the back is bleeding, and see the thing for himself, then he would understand the cruelty of slavery, indeed. So, if a man would know the love of Christ, he must lay himself out to discover the deformity of sin, and the awful degradation into which crime casts mankind, and then he will know that love which stoops from the highest heaven can reach down to the gates of the deepest hell, and can thrust its arms up to the very elbows in the mire to pull these accursed ones out of the pit of distruction, and make them blessed for ever among the shining ones before the throne. Strict and practical obedience to the Master's commands, gives an amount of knowledge which is not to be attained by sentiments of gratitude, much

less by systems of doctrine. This is is a higher stage of grace, though not very high either. Yet, I would to God that more of us had even got here, for I fear there are many who have a name to live, but who do not obey Christ; many, perhaps, to whom the minister's command would be more potent than Christ's command, and upon whom the law of the land would have far more influence than the law of Christ. A believer ought to be such a one that a mere word from Christ is enough for him; or, as a Quaker was wont to express it, his heart should be like a cork upon the waters, which every undulation of the waves would affect; thus should his heart float, as it were, in the Spirit's influences, till every motion of the Holy Spirit, every law and wish of Christ should affect him instantly. I would be passively active—if you can comprehend such a contradiction—I would be passive so as never to have will or wish o. my own, and active so as to have the will and wish of Christ impelling me always to keep his commands. When a man cometh here, he begins to show real progress in knowing "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

IV. There is a fourth and higher stage by far than these. There is a way, not known to many moderns, but much practised by the ancients, of knowing the love of Christ by *contemplation*. Do you know that in the early ages of the Church they spoke more of Christ and of his person, and thought more of him than we do. When I have sometimes read the fathers, and some of the devotional books of believers who are not much known, I have frequently had to say, "Well, I do not see much here about justification by faith, but I see a great deal about the efficacy of the precious blood." I do not read, perhaps, about the pardon of sin, but I read about the blood-shedding, and about being washed therein. The early preachers preached not so much atonement—though they preached that, mark—but it was the five wounds, the bloody sweat, the cross, and the passion. We talk of the fruits and the effects; they seem to speak of the first great cause—the man, the Christ, the cross, the vinegar, the nails, the spear, the cry of "It is finished," the "*Lama sabacthani*," the burial, and the resurrection. And in those times, whether or not it was that men had not so much to do as they have now, I cannot tell, but they found time to have long seasons of contemplation, and they would sit alone and worship, and draw near to Christ, and steadily fix their gaze upon his person; for to them he was a real person, whom the eye of their faith could see as clearly as the eye of sense can see outward objects, and they looked, and looked, and looked again, till the love of Christ grew brighter to them than the sun at his meridian, and for very dimness of mortal sight they veiled their faces and paused their speech—awhile their souls were bathed in inward joy and peace unspeakable. There have been some such in these later times, but not many. There was Isaac Ambrose, author of that book, "Looking unto Jesus." He was pastor of a church at Preston, in Lancashire, and "it was his usual custom once a year," says Dr. Calumy, "for the space of a month to retire into a little hut in a wood, and avoiding all human converse, to devote himself to contemplation." It was true he then only had eleven months in the year to preach in, but those eleven were a great deal better than the twelve would otherwise have been,

for there, alone with his Master, he received such riches from him, that when he came back, he threw about jewels with both his hands, and scattered glorious thoughts and words broad-cast in his ministry. That book, "Looking unto Jesus," is a blessed memorial of his quiet hours and his secret communion with Jesus. Then there was Rutherford, the man who has expounded the whole of Solomon's Song without knowing it, in his celebrated letters. When he was in the dungeon at Aberdeen, he exclaimed first of all, "I had only one eye and they put that out." It was the preaching of the gospel, and before long he has got both his eyes back again. Hear him writing in his letters, "My foes thought to punish me by casting me into a prison, but lo! they have blessed me by taking me into Christ's withdrawing room, where I sit with him and am with him both by night and day without disturbance." The expressions he sometimes uses are so rapturous, that I would not quote them here. Love-letters are not to be read in the streets, and the words which souls inflamed with heavenly fire sometimes use towards Christ are not fit for public repetition; for there are passages of love, there are sweet embraces of affection of which we must not tell, for this were to commit a treason such as Paul might have done if he had told on earth those words which he had heard in heaven, and which it would not be lawful for a man to utter here. Do you know anything about this, dear friends? Oh, I pray you do not think I dream! These things are realities. I pray you think not that I am enthusiastic or fanatical. There are many believers who could tell you that it is their daily delight to be much with Christ. Oh, perhaps some of you know what it is to have Christ with you in your shop; your hands are busy weighing your goods or measuring out your wares, but Christ is with you and your hearts are content. Or, as I remember hearing an old saint say one Sunday, when he was preaching from that text he pronounced so strangely, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." "Ah," said he, "you do not know where I live, you think I live at so-and-so, in such-and-such a street, but I do not, for I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God." Now there are some saints who, though they are in the world, are dead to it. It has no attractions for them; it cannot get their hearts; their hearts are with Jesus; they are not here; and they have sent their souls onwards to that place where their bodies are one day to go, to the throne where Jesus sits and reigns. I remember hearing these expressions once used at a prayer-meeting; they struck my mind, and they still abide in my memory. A brother had been praying and had asked a very great boon. "O Lord," said he, "give me Mary's place.

> 'Oh, that I might for ever sit
> With Mary at the Master's feet,
> Be this my happy choice.'

Lord, I would sit at thy feet and hear what thou hast to say, and receive it as a willing scholar receives his master's words." I thought he would stop there, but he said, "Nay, Lord, I have not asked enough; I have not asked according to the royalty of thy nature. Lift me higher; lift me higher. Not at thy feet would I sit, but I would lean upon thy

breast. Oh, put me where John was, that I may lean my head upon thy bosom. Let me not merely learn the truth thou teachest, but may I feel thy heart beat, and know thy love to me.

> 'Oh that I might with holy John
> For ever lean my head upon
> The bosom of my Lord.'"

Well now, I thought that second prayer was a noble one; but he had yet a third one to offer, and he said, "Nay, Lord, nay; that is not enough; I have not asked yet according to the tenour of thy promise. Thou hast lifted me from thy feet to thy breast, now lift me higher, to thy lips;" and then he quoted the words of the song—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine;" and he very beautifully paraphrased it like this—"Lord, let me give to thee the tokens of my love, and receive from thee the present tokens of thy love to me; and not only know it, and feel thy heart beat, but receive the token of it as my lip of prayer meets thy lip of blessing, and my lip of thanksgiving touches thy lip of benediction." Oh, there are heights and depths in this blessed contemplative life which I must not tell you of here, and I thank God that there are some men who, though they go very far wrong in doctrine, are very right on this point; and if they are right here, verily they are right in the essential. When a man can come right up to Christ and throw his arms around him; when he can say, "That blood is mine; that Christ is my joy; his love is my love; his presence is my heaven; his character is my great example; I trust in him, and I love him"—that man may say fifty things that are not right, but he has said the thing that is essentially right, and his soul is safe. "Well," says one, "I shall never get to know Christ's love by contemplation; I have no time." Ah, you had better have an hour's less sleep than lose this blessed contemplation of Christ. "Oh, but I have so much to do." Dear friends, we can sometimes do more in one half an hour than we can do at other times in hours, according to the tenour of our minds. Now, I think that contemplating Christ winds up the soul, and puts it into a right frame, so that when we come back we can do more for the Master than we ever did before. Perhaps you have seen them driving piles in the marshes. There is a large piece of timber that has to be driven deep into the ground, and you have seen those pile-driving machines. There is an immense weight, and they pull it up, and up, and up, before they let it fall. Now, if they only pull it up a little way and then let it drop, well it comes down with some force, but not any great deal; but when they lift it as high as ever they can draw it up, and then let it come down at once, why what a drive it gives the pile! It is the going up that gives it such force in coming down. And I believe that those are the best sermons for driving the truth into the sinner's heart, that come from ministers who have been wound up very high before they ran down in the sermon; and I think your usefulness will be sure to be powerful and mighty, if in private you are wound up to the very summit of contemplative delight by thinking of the work, the sufferings, and the triumphs of Christ. Certainly the

sweetness of it alone is a sufficient reward, and then the benefit which follows will be a sevenfold recompense for a most pleasant exercise.

V. Well now, we have taken you up some height, but we must prepare for a flight which is higher still. To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge by contemplation is very high, but there is a higher stage than this. There are times when I almost fear to speak of these things, but there are some here, surely, who will comprehend me, some here who have passed through the same state and will not think that I am dreaming. There are times when the soul has long contemplated Christ, and there are some who know not only to contemplate, but *to enjoy*. Even on earth faith sometimes gives place to a present and conscious enjoyment. There are times with the believer when whether he is in the body or out of the body he can scarce tell; God knoweth; and though not caught up to the third heaven he is brought to the very gates, and if not permitted to see Christ on his throne, he does so see him on his cross, that if an infidel should say to him, "There is no Christ," he could say, "I have seen him; my eyes have looked upon him, and my hands have touched him after a spiritual sort." There are many such rapturous seasons as this on record in the biographies of good men. I shall quote but one or two, and I hope there are some here who have known them in their own experience. In the life of Mr. Flavel, who was one of the most temperate of the Puritans, and one not at all given to anything like fanaticism, there is an event mentioned which once occurred to him. He said that being once on a journey alone on horseback, the thought of the love of Christ came upon him with great power, and as he rode gently along the road, the thought seemed to increase in force and strength, till at last he forgot all about earth and even where he was. Somehow or other his horse stood still, but he did not notice it; and when he came to himself, through some passer-by observing him, he found that he had bled very copiously during the time, and getting off his horse he washed his face at the brook, and he said, "I did verily think as I stood there, that if I was not in heaven I could hardly hope to be more blessed in heaven than I was then." He mounted his horse and rode on to a place of entertainment where he was to pass the night. Supper was brought in, but left untasted on the table. He sat all night long without sleep, enjoying the presence of Christ, and he says, "I was more rested that night than with any sleep I ever had, and I heard and saw in my soul, by faith, such things as I had never known before." The like occurred to Mr. Tennant, who was a man who spent many hours in private, and sometimes when it was time to preach he was quite unable to stand unless first carried into his pulpit, when he would put his hands out and lean there, and say such glorious things of Christ, that those who looked upon him verily thought that they looked upon the face of an angel. Rutherford, too, is another specimen. When he used to preach about Christ, he preached so wonderfully, that on any other subject he was not at all like himself; and the Duke of Argyle was once so warmed when Rutherford got upon that subject, that he cried out in Church—"Now, man, ye are on the right strain; keep to it;" and he did keep to it, and the little man's thin voice seemed to swell with supernatural

grandeur when he began to talk of his precious, precious Lord Jesus, and to extol and exalt him who was the bridegroom of his soul, his brother and his blessed companion. "Oh, these are flights," you say. Yes, they are flights indeed, beloved; but if you could get them sometimes, you would come back to the world's cares and troubles like giants refreshed with new wine, caring nothing for anything that might happen. Christ would be so sweetly and blessedly within you, that you could bear the burden and think nothing of it, and though the grasshopper was a burden before, you could now carry it right readily.

Well, I have taken you up to where not many go in these times, but I hope there are some who will yet ascend here till they shall even embrace Christ, and who will sit down at his table till they shall know Ralph Erskine's blessed sickness of love, and, in the conscious enjoyment of a precious Saviour, shall say in the words of the spouse, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love; his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

VI. But I want to take you higher than this; not higher in some senses, but higher really, for these raptures are, of course, only like angels' visits, few and far between; but here is something which may be more lasting, and which, certainly, is a higher state of mind as to the knowledge of Christ. To know Christ *sympathetically*, is a yet higher stage than any to which we have attained before. What do I mean by this? I will show you, first of all, what I do not mean. We will suppose ourselves standing on the brow of the hill with Jerusalem in the valley below. Jerusalem is to be destroyed by the Romans; the decree has gone forth that its sin must be punished. Now, here is a brother who holds very high doctrines in his head, but who has not much sympathy in his heart. Come up here, brother. Do you see that city there? That is all to be destroyed! Do you see its streets? They are all to be crimsoned with blood! Do you see its temple? Not one stone of it is to be left upon another! What do you think of it? "Well," says he, "if they are to be saved they will be saved; if it is in the purpose and the decree it will be so. I am sure I am very sorry if they should not be, but I do not see that it is any particular business of mine; the Lord will have his own, and it will all be well." Get down, sir! What do you know about the love of Christ? Nothing! Give such a man as you that text, "He beheld the city and wept over it," and you would not know how to preach from it, for you do not know the Saviour's heart, and have not known his love. But bring hither another man; he holds the same doctrinal truths, but he looks down on the city, and what does he say?

> "Oh, fain my pity would reclaim
> And snatch the fire-brands from the flame."

Lord, what must I do? Give me anything to do for them! My heart's desire and prayer for them is that they may be saved; and the tears begin to flow, and when he turns to the book and reads that Jesus beheld the city and wept over it, and said, "If thou at least in this thy day had known the things which belong unto thy peace," he says, "Well, I do not know how to explain that to my doctrinal friend; I do not know how

to make these feelings quite square and tally with the doctrine; but somehow or other I know there is no disagreement, for I feel the one is true, and I also feel the sympathy in my heart; I know that God will have his own, but I hope he will have them through my instrumentality; I believe that his chosen will be brought in, but, O that it may be my happy lot to bring in some of them to the praise and the glory of his grace!" "Why," some professors say, "I am not my brother's keeper." No, but if you are not, I tell you what are—you are your brother's killer! You are one of the two. If you say you are not your brother's keeper, rest assured that you are a Cain, and that you will be your brother's murderer, for we either do good or hate. It is impossible for us to be devoid of influence. If the rill runs through the meads it makes them fertile; if you dam it up and make it stagnant, you have not destroyed its influence. Ah, no, you have only changed it into a fœtid pool and its influence shall curse the valley with disease. So with a good man, if he serves his Master, he is scattering mercy abroad; but let him, if it were possible for him to do so, let him cease to serve the Lord and become idle, and then he scatters miasma, plague, and death. Oh, do we know the love of Christ by feeling it in our own hearts? There are some of us who can say that we have felt that we could do anything for souls. When we have heard it said of the Master, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," we have felt that we would not spare ourselves if God would only spare them; and when Paul said he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, while commentators have been spelling that over, and cannot make it out, we have had sympathy with it, and have been able to say, "We have felt the same;" we have felt that we could even be lost to save others, and we have said, "Let my name perish; let me be forgotten if my congregation may only be saved; if my children may be blessed; if my hearers may be converted to God." Men in this state know Christ's love after a wonderful and marvellous sort. May God teach you each this way. May he help you to weep like Christ, to work like Christ, ay, and to be ready to die like Christ, if it were needful by such means to bring sinners to their Saviour and their Lord. O that we could get here! I know my dear brother, the pastor of this Church, would desire nothing more for you than that you might know Christ's love by feeling it in your hearts. O that Christ would come and look out of these eyes, and weep down these cheeks! O that he would speak through these lips, till it should not be the old self, man, that thought, and spoke, and acted, but the new-born Spirit of the Lord Jesus that had come into us and possessed us with a higher and a nobler life, that we might spend and be spent for him.

I think I shall have but one step further to take you, though there are some which are higher still. Ere, I do so I must tell you one anecdote to guard you against a possible mistake. There is a tendency, in the contemplative knowledge of Christ's love, to self-indulgence. I know at the present moment a dear servant of Christ; I shall always regard him as such; he may be known to some of you, though I would not like to mention his name. He was once a notable minister in this city, and was exceedingly useful. He began the contemplative life. He lived very near to Christ, and his preaching was exceedingly sweet to his

hearers; there were many converts; he had a large Church, and it exceedingly prospered. But so sweet were his private enjoyments, that he began to relax in his public duties. He did preach, but he seldom allowed himself to see his hearers, and at last arrived at such a pitch of retirement, that he could walk into his pulpit without even speaking to his deacons, and then deliver himself. But the man's usefulness ceased. Though still a gracious soul, yet he has missed his way, and ceased to be one of the honoured leaders of Christ's Church. Now, there is a tendency, a wrong tendency, mark, of getting so high and not wanting to get any higher. Even the contemplative life itself ought only to be considered as a stepping-stone to something beyond, and when we get to the very highest point, we are still to say with Paul, as we sit down upon the mile-stone, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press forward to those which are before." It is related of a certain monk who, having been long in his cell alone, thought whilst in his devotions that he saw the Lord Jesus. Of course the tale is fabulous, but I relate it for the sake of its moral. He thought he saw the Lord before him as crucified, and he heard his voice speaking sweet and comfortable words to him. Just at that moment, when his soul was in a very flood of delight, he heard the convent-bell ring, and it was his turn to go out to the gate and give away bread to the beggars who stood there. Oh, he had never heard that bell ring so dolefully before! It seemed to him like the knell of all his joys. The impulse of duty, however, was stronger than that of delight, and he went his way with a heavy heart to distribute the bread. As he came back to his cell, he thought, "Ah, I shall never see that again! Christ is gone from me, and I shall never know these enjoyments again!" When, to his surprise, there was the vision still, and as he bowed before it with delight, he heard a voice which said, "If thou hadst stayed I would have gone; but since thou didst my work I tarried to give thee thy reward." Now, there is a tendency when we have been alone and in private, and have had sweet fellowship with Christ, for us to feel—"I do not want to go out from this; I do not want to be disturbed just now; I would rather not do anything just now." I do not suppose there are very many of you who get into this state, but there may be some who think at such times, "I do not want to preach to-day; I would rather not do anything; it is best that I should be alone." Ah, it is a strong temptation, and you must strive against it, and say, "No, I have enjoyments in my religion, but I did not seek my religion for the enjoyment it would give me. I must look higher than that, to the God I serve, and to the Lord and Master whose I am and whom I serve. I love the jewels he gives me to wear upon my fingers, but I love his person better, and I am not to look upon these rings, and forget to look into his eyes; I love the sweet couch that he makes for me at night, but I am not to lie there and forget the fields that are to be ploughed and the battles that are to be fought. I must be up and doing. The contemplative life must lead me to duty, and then shall I know Christ even as I am known.

VII. And now, the last and highest step of all, upon which we can

only say a few words, is that which is called by deep writers and experienced believers on this point, the *absorbing* love of Christ. How shall I tell you what this is? I cannot, except I quote Wesley's words—

"Oh, love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up with thee."

"I thirst"—can you get as far as that? "I faint"—that is a high state, indeed! "*I die*"—that is the top.

"I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The fulness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me."

"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," said the Apostle Paul, and that is where we must get, when the man ceases to feel himself the "I," and only recognises himself as part of Christ. It is our individuality that we really have to get rid of in this matter; it is our selfish separateness, I mean. We need to feel that we are a part of Christ, a member of his body, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; that we have no more desire to act, or think, or feel according to anything that is here, but to send our hearts up to the great heart of Christ in heaven, only tarrying here whilst our souls are walking the golden streets with Christ. I do not know if I might be bold enough to say, "Blessed is the man who shall be able to attain to the state when that which thinketh is the head of Christ, and that which feeleth is the heart of Christ, when the great seat of all the sensations, spiritually, is in Christ and not in himself, and he himself is,"

"Plunged into the Godhead's sea
And lost in its immensity."

The Brahmins believe that the highest perfection is to be absorbed into God, and there is a certain truth in it, though not as they mean it. When we are lost in God we are highest, and when it is not we, but Christ, and we have come to be with him, and his heart is ours, and his love, and soul, and wish are ours, then it is that we comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Now, I have not said much to-night to the ungodly; but if I could make any of you feel your mouths a-watering after Christ by what I have said, I should be pleased indeed. Oh, if you did but know the sweetness of the love of Christ, you would not be careless about it.

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too."

Blind bat's eyes are those that cannot see beauty in Christ! Hard, stony hearts, that cannot feel any love to him! What do you say, sinner? Do you say, "O that I knew Christ's love! O that I knew his love to me!" Sinner, he hath sent me to thee to-night to preach to thee his gospel;

and this is his gospel, though not the gospel which some preach, for I have heard some finish their sermons thus—"Go home and pray; go home and do your best to find Christ." All this is good enough advice, but it is not the gospel. The gospel is—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe in Christ is to trust in him; that is all it is—to trust in him. "But I must repent," saith one. Repentance is a change of mind, and is a blessed fruit of faith, and comes with faith. That repentance which cometh before faith is no true repentance, for it is a repentance that needs to be repented of. Where there is no faith it is impossible to please God. That repentance which has no faith in it must be displeasing to God, and needeth to be repenteth of. The first business you have, sinner, is not to feel anything, but to put your trust in Christ. Your business is not to try to make yourselves fit to come to Christ, but to come to him just as you are. You are to trust Christ, and to trust him now. "Oh, but I am a black sinner!" Come and be washed. "Oh, but I am a naked sinner." Come and be clothed. "But I am lost." Oh, sirs, the Master has come to seek and to save that which is lost. You are not to find yourselves first, and then think he will come and find you. He is come to seek for you. Hark! while the trumpet sounds in the street without meaning, I would sound the gospel trumpet here. Come and welcome! Come just as you are! To come is to trust, and simply to fall flat at the foot of the cross, and say, "Jesus, I trust to thee to save me." That done you are saved, and your sin is gone. He took it and was punished for it; you are righteous in God's sight, for his righteousness is yours, and you are saved. Christ, the head, is your representative; you are delivered; Christ has broken the neck of your foe, and you are emancipated in the very moment when you believe. Some persons dislike instantaneous conversions. Let them read the Bible and see what sorts of conversion there are there. There is Saul of Tarsus, there is the Philippian jailer; there are the three thousand on the day of Pentecost: these are all instantaneous conversions. There is a man over there, near the door, who came in here, perhaps, he did not know what for, or to listen to some strange, out-of-the-way-matter. That man, if Christ shall meet with him to-night, and lead him in the way of his grace, may go out of this chapel as much saved as if it were seven years ago when he first believed on Jesus, for

> "The moment a sinner believes
> And trusts in a crucified God,"

he is saved; it is all done; the work is finished, and there is no need that anything else should be done. The robe of righteousness has been completed; there is not a stitch to be added to it. Sinner, this is the glory of the gospel. Trust Jesus, and thou art saved, and saved for ever, beyond the reach of destruction. May God meet with some soul here, to-night, and especially may he now stir up you, his people, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE STONY HEART REMOVED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 25TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I wil' take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

THE fall of man was utter and entire. Some things when they have become dilapidated may be repaired; but the old house of mankind is so thoroughly decayed that it must be pulled down even to its foundation, and a new house must be erected. To attempt mere improvement is to anticipate a certain failure. Manhood is like an old garment that is rent and rotten; he that would mend it with new cloth doth but make the rent worse. Manhood is like one of the old skin bottles of the Orientals; he who would put the new wine into it shall find that the bottles will burst, and his wine will be lost. Old shoes and clouted might be good enough for Gibeonites; but we are so thoroughly outworn that we must be made new, or thrown upon the dunghill. It is a wonder of wonders that such a thing is possible. If a tree loses its branch, a new branch may spring out; if you cut into the bark and mark the letters of your name, in process of time the bark may heal its own wound, and the mark may be erased. But who could give a new heart to the tree? Who could put new sap into it? By what possibility could you change its inner structure? If the core were smitten with death, what power but the divine could ever restore it to life? If a man has injured his bones, the fractured parts soon send forth a healing liquid, and the bone is by-and-bye restored to its former strength, if a man hath youth on his side. But if a man's heart were rotten, how could that be cured? If the heart were a putrid ulcer, if the very vitals of the man were rotten, what human surgery, what marvellous medicine could touch a defect so radical as this? Well did our hymn say:

"Can aught beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine,
To form the heart anew.

To chase the shades of death away
And bid the sinner live!
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give."

But while such a thing would be impossible apart from God, it is certain that God can do it. Oh, how the Master delighteth to undertake impossibilities! To do what others can do were but like unto man; but to accomplish that which is impossible to the creature is a mighty and noble proof of the dignity of the Creator. He delighteth to undertake strange things; to bring light out of darkness; order out of confusion; to send life into the dead; to heal the leprosy; to work marvels of grace, and mercy, and wisdom, and peace—these, I say, God delighteth to do; and so, while the thing is impossible to us, it is possible to him. And more, its impossibility to us commends it to him, and makes him the more willing to undertake it, that he may thus glorify his great name.

According to the Word of God, man's heart is by nature like a stone; but God, through his grace, removes the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. It is this prodigy of love, this miracle of grace, which is to engage our attention to-night. I trust we shall speak now, not of something that has happened to others only, but of a great wonder which has been wrought in ourselves. I trust we shall talk experimentally, and hear personally, and feel that we have an interest in these splendid deeds of divine love.

Two things we shall talk of to-night. First, *the stony heart and its dangers*; secondly, *the heart of flesh and its privileges.*

I. Some few words upon THE STONY HEART AND ITS DANGERS. Why is the heart of man compared to a stone at all?

1. First, because, like a stone it is *cold.* Few persons like to be always treading upon cold stones in their houses, and hence we floor our habitations; and it is thought to be a part of the hardship of the prisoner if he has nothing to sit down or rest upon but the cold, cold stone. You may heat a stone for a little season if you thrust it into the fire, but for how short a time will it retain its heat; and though it glowed just now, how very soon it loses all its warmth and returns again to its native coldness. Such is the heart of man. It is warm enough towards sin; it it grows hot as coals of juniper, towards its own lusts; but naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God. You may think you have heated it for a little season under a powerful exhortation, or in presence of a solemn judgment, but how soon it returns to its natural state! We have heard of one who, seeing a large congregation all weeping under a sermon, said, "What a wonderful thing to see so many weeping under the truth!" and another added, "But there is a greater wonder than that—to see how they leave off weeping as soon as the sermon is over, concerning those things which ought to make them weep always and constantly." Ah, dear friends, no warmth of eloquence can ever warm the stony heart of man into a glow of love to Jesus; nay, no force of entreaty can get so much as a spark of gratitude out of the flinty heart of man. Though your hearts renewed by grace should be like a flaming furnace, yet you cannot warm your neighbour's heart with the divine heat; he will think you a fool for being so enthusiastic; he will turn upon his heel and think you a madman to be so concerned about matters that seem so trivial to him: the warmth that is in your heart you cannot communicate to him, for he is not, while unconverted, capable of receiving it. The heart of man, like marble, is stone-cold.

2. Then, again, like a stone, it is *hard*. You get the hard stone, especially some sorts of stone which have been hewn from granite-beds, and you may hammer as you will, but you shall make no impression. The heart of man is compared in Scripture to the nether millstone, and in another place it is even compared to the adamant stone; it is harder than the diamond; it cannot be cut; it cannot be broken; it cannot be moved. I have seen the great hammer of the law, which is ten times more ponderous than Nasmyth's great steam hammer, come down upon a man's heart, and the heart has never shown the slightest signs of shrinking. We have seen a hundred powerful shots sent against it, we have marked the great battery of the law with its ten great pieces of ordnance all fired against the heart of man, but man's heart has been harder even than the sheathing of the iron-clad ships, and the great shots of the law have dropped harmlessly against a man's conscience—he did not, he would not feel. What razor-edged sentence can cut your hearts? What needle-warning can prick your consciences? Alas, all means are unavailing! No arguments have power to move a soul so steeled, so thoroughly stony, hard, and impenetrable. Some of you now present, have given more than enough evidence of the hardness of your hearts. Sickness has befallen you, death has come in at your windows, affliction has come up against you, but like Pharaoh, you have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I will not bow my neck, neither will I do his will. I am my own master, and I will have my own pleasure and my own way. I will not yield to God." O rocks of iron and hills of brass, ye are softer than the proud heart of man!

3. Again, a stone is *dead*. You can find no feeling in it. Talk to it; it will shed no tears of pity, though you recount to it the saddest tales; no smiles will gladden it, though you should tell it the most happy story. It is dead; there is no consciousness in it; prick it and it will not bleed; stab it and it cannot die, for it is dead already. You cannot make it wince, or start, or show any signs of sensibility. Now, though man's heart is not like this as to natural things, yet spiritually this is just its condition. You cannot make it show one spiritual emotion. "Ye are dead in trespasses and sins," powerless, lifeless, without feeling, without emotion. Transient emotions towards good men have, even as the surface of a slab is wet after a shower, but real vital emotions of good they cannot know, for the showers of heaven reach not the interior of the stone. Melancthon may preach, but old Adam is too dead for him to quicken him. Ye may go down into the grave where the long sleep has fallen on humanity, and ye may seek to revive it, but there is no power in human tongue to revive the dead. Man is like the deaf adder which will not be charmed, charm we never so wisely. Tears are lost on him; threatenings are but as the whistlings of the wind, the preachings of the law, and even of Christ crucified—all these are null and void and fall hopelessly to the ground, so long as the man's heart continues what it is by nature—dead, and hard, and cold.

4. Those three adjectives might be sufficient to give a full description, for if we add two more we shall but in some degree repeat ourselves. Man's heart is like a stone because *it is not easily to be softened*. Lay a stone in water as long as you will and you shall not find it

readly subdued. There are some sorts of stone that yield to the stress of weather, especially in the smoky atmosphere and the sulphurous vapours of London; certain stones crumble to decay, but the stone of a man's heart no climate can affect, no weathers can subdue; it grows harder whether it be the soft sunshine of love or the harsh tempest of judgment that falls upon it. Mercy and love alike make it more solid, and knit its particles closer together; and surely until the Omnipotent himself speak the word, the heart of man grows harder, and harder, and harder, and refuses to be broken. There is an invention, I believe, for liquifying flints, and then afterwards they may be poured out in a solution which is supposed to have the virtue of resisting the action of the atmosphere when put upon certain limestones; but you never can liquify, except by a divine power, the flinty heart of man. Granite may be ground, may be broken into pieces, but unless God gets the hammer in his hand, and even he must put both hands to it, the great granitic heart of man will not yield in any way. Certain stones have their veins, and certain crystallic stones may be so dexterously struck, that they will frequently break even with a slight blow; but you can never find a vein in man's heart by which the attempt to conquer it will be assisted from within. You may smite right and left with death, with judgment, with mercy, with privileges, with tears, with entreaties, with threatenings, and it will not break; nay, even the fires of hell, do not melt man's heart, for the damned in hell grow more hard by their agonies, and they hate God, and blaspheme him all the more because of the suffering they endure. Only Omnipotence itself, I say, can ever soften this hard heart of man.

5. So then, man's heart is cold, and dead, and hard, and cannot be softened; and then, again—and this is but an enlargement of a former thought—*it is utterly senseless*, incapable of receiving impressions. Remember, again, I am not speaking of the heart of man physically, I am not speaking of it even as I would if I were teaching mental science; we are only now regarding it from a spiritual point of view. Men do receive mental impressions under the preaching of the Word; they often get so uneasy that they cannot shake off their thoughts; but, alas! their goodness is as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, and it vanishes as a dream. But, spiritually, you can no more impress the heart of man than you might leave a bruise upon a stone. Wax receives an impression from a seal, but not the stern, unyielding stone; if you have hot running wax you may make what mark you please upon it, but when you have the cold, cold stone, though you bear never so hard upon the stamp, there is no impression, the surface shows no trace of your labour. So is man's heart by nature. I know some who say it is not so, they do not like to hear human nature slandered, so they say. Well, friend, if thou hast not this hard heart, why is it thou art not saved? I remember an anecdote of Dr. Gill which hits this nail on the head. It is said that a man came to him in the vestry of his chapel and said, "Dr. Gill, you have been preaching the doctrine of human inability, I don't believe you. I believe that man can repent and can believe, and is not without spiritual power." "Well," said the doctor, "have you repented and believed?" "No," said the other. "Very well,

then," said he, "you deserve double damnation." And so I say to the man who boasts that he has not such a hard heart as this—have you laid hold of Christ? have you come to him? if you have not, then out of your own heart be you condemned, for you deserve double destruction from the presence of God, for having resisted the influences of God's Spirit and rejected his grace. I need not say more about the hardness of the human heart, as that will come up incidentally by-and-bye, when we are speaking of the heart of flesh.

But now, let us notice the danger to which this hard heart is exposed. A hard heart is exposed to the danger of *final impenitence.* If all these years the processes of nature have been at work with your heart, and have not softened it, have you not reason to conclude that it may be so even to the end? And then you will certainly perish. Many of you are no strangers to the means of grace. I speak to some of you who have been hearing the gospel preached ever since you were little ones: you went to the Sabbath school; mayhap, you were wont in your boyhood to listen to old Mr. So-and-so, who often brought tears to your eyes, and of late you have been here, and there have been times with this congregation, when the word seemed enough to melt the very rocks, and make the hard hearts of steel flow down in repentance, and yet you are still the same as ever. What does reason tell you to expect? Surely this should be the natural inference from the logic of facts: you will continue as you are now, means will be useless to you, privileges will but become accumulated judgments, and you will go on till time is over, and eternity approaches, unblest, unsaved, and you will go down to the doom of the lost soul. "Oh!" saith one, "I hope not;" and I add, I hope not too; but I am solemnly afraid of it, especially with some of you. Some of you are growing old under the gospel, and you are getting so used to my voice that you could almost go to sleep under it. As Rowland Hill says of the blacksmith's dog, that at first he used to be afraid of the sparks, but afterwards got so used to it that he could lie and sleep under the anvil; and there are some of you who can sleep under the anvil, with the sparks of God's wrath flying about your nostrils, asleep under the most solemn discourse. I do not mean with your eyes shut, for I might then point to you, but asleep in your hearts, your souls being given to slumber while your eyes may regard the preacher, and your ears may be listening to his voice.

And further, there is another danger, hearts that are not softened *grow harder and harder;* what little sensibility they seemed to have, at last departs. Perhaps there are some of you that can recollect what you were when you were boys. There is a picture in the Royal Academy at this hour, which teaches a good moral: there is a mother putting her children to bed, the father happens to be in just when they are going to their slumbers; the little ones are kneeling down saying their prayers; there is only a curtain between them and the room where the father is, and he is sitting down; he is putting his hand to his head, and the tears are flowing very freely, for somehow he cannot stand it; he recollects when he too was taught to pray at his mother's knee, and though he has grown up forgetful of God and the things of God, he remembers the time when it was not so with him. Take care, my dear

say, about great mischiefs; but hearts of flesh repent even at the very thought of sin. To have indulged a foul imagination, to have flattered a lustful thought, and to have allowed it to tarry even for a minute is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieved and rent before God with pain. The heart of stone says, when it has done great iniquity, "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing! Who am I that I should be afraid of God's law?" But not so the heart of flesh. Great sins are little to the stony heart, little sins are great to the heart of flesh—if little sins there be. Conscience in the heart of stone is seared as with a hot iron; conscience in the heart of flesh is raw and very tender; like the sensitive plant, it coils up its leaves at the slightest touch, it cannot bear the presence of evil; it is like a delicate consumptive, who feels every wind and is affected by every change of atmosphere. God give us such a blessedly tender conscience as that. Then again, the heart of flesh grows *tender of God's will.* My Lord Will-be-will is a great blusterer, and it is hard to bring him down to subject himself to God's will. When you have a man's conscience on God's side, you have only half the battle if you cannot get his will. The old maxim—

> "Convince a man against his will
> He's of the same opinion still."

is true with regard to this as well as regard to anything else. Oh! there are some of you that know the right, but you *will* do the wrong. You know what is evil, but you will to pursue it. Now, when the heart of flesh is given, the will bends like a willow, quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like an osier in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is stern and stubborn, and you must rend it up by the roots; but the renewed will is gentle and pliable, feels the divine influence, and sweetly yields to it. To complete the picture, in the tender heart there is a *tenderness of the affections.* The hard heart does not love God, but the renewed heart does. The hard heart is selfish, cold, stolid. "Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord? Why should I give my heart to Christ?" The heart of flesh says—

> "Thou know'st I love thee, dearest Lord,
> But oh! I long to soar
> Far from this world of sin and woe,
> And learn to love thee more."

O may God give us a tenderness of affection, that we may love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Now, the privileges of this renewed heart are these. "'Tis here the Spirit dwells, 'tis here that Jesus rests." The soft heart is ready

now to receive every spiritual blessing. It is fitted to yield every heavenly fruit to the honour and praise of God. Oh! if we had none but tender hearts to preach to, what blessed work our ministry would be. What happy success! What sowings on earth! What harvests in heaven! We may indeed pray that God may work this change if it were only that our ministry might be more often a savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death. A soft heart is the best defence against sin, while it is the best preparative for heaven. A tender heart is the best means of watchfulness against evil, while it is also the best means of preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall shortly descend from heaven.

Now, my voice fails me, and in your hearts I certainly shall not be heard for my much speaking. Great complaints have been brought against somebody's sermons for being too long, though I hardly think they could have been mine. So let us be brief, and let us conclude; only we must press this enquiry home—Has God taken away the heart of stone, and has he given you the heart of flesh. Dear friend, you cannot change your own heart. Your outward works will not change it; you may rub as long as ever you like outside of a bottle, but you could not turn ditch-water into wine; you may polish the exterior of your lanthorn, but it will not give you light until the candle burns within. The gardener may prune a crab tree, but all the pruning in the world won't turn it into an apricot; so you may attend to all the moralities in the world, but these won't change your heart. Polish your shilling, but it will not change into gold; nor will your heart alter its own nature. What, then, is to be done? Christ is the great heart changer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be be saved." The Holy Spirit gives faith, and then through faith the nature is renewed. What sayest thou, sinner? Dost thou believe that Christ is able to save thee? Oh, trust him then to save thee, and if thou doest that thou art saved; thy nature is renewed, and the work of sanctification which shall begin to-night, shall go on until it shall come to its perfection, and thou, borne on angel's wings to heaven, "glad the summons to obey," shalt enter into felicity and holiness, and be redeemed with the saints in white, made spotless through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

RELIGION—A REALITY!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 22ND, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."—Deuteronomy xxxi. 47.

It appears from this closing remark of Moses, that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness: for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed national obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the w lderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offences against God's law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts; while repentance and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer, and a restoration of peace and plenty. They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue; and yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the gospel? It would, indeed, be marvellous if there were not many more, for the gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed: we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trodden under foot. The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, "It is a vain thing," and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the truth, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion, that it is not remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. Men have made pretences of wondrous sanctity, whilst inwardly full of rottenness; and sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic: "They are none of them good; they are all deceivers; the best of them are hypocrites, and religion itself is a vain thing." However false may be the conclusion here—and we believe it to be utterly so—yet we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a falsehood, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors.

Now we will grant you this morning that much of the religion which is abroad in the world is a vain thing. The religion of *ceremonies* is vain. If a man shall trust in the gorgeous pomp of uncommanded mysteries, if he shall consider that there resides some mystic efficacy in a priest, and that by uttering certain words a blessing is infallibly received, we tell him that his religion is a vain thing. You might as well go to the Witch of Endor for grace as to a priest; and if you rely upon words, the "*Abracadabra*" of a magician will as certainly raise you to heaven, or rather sink you to hell, as the performances of the best ordained minister under heaven. Ceremonies in themselves are vain, futile, empty. There are but two of God's ordaining, they are most simple, and neither of them pretend to have any efficacy in themselves. They only set forth an inward and spiritual grace, not necessarily tied to them, but only given to those who by faith perceive their teachings. All ceremonial religion, no matter how sincere, if it consist in relying upon forms and observances, is a vain thing. So with *creed-religion*—by which I mean not to speak against creeds, for I love "the form of sound words," but that religion which lies in believing with the intellect a set of dogmas, without partaking of the life of God; all this is a vain thing. Again, that religion *which only lies in making a profession of what one does not possess*, in wearing the Christian name, and observing the ritual of the Church, but which does not so affect the character as to make a man holy, nor so touch the heart as to make a man God's true servant—such a religion is vain throughout. O my dear hearers, how much worthless religion may you see everywhere! So long as men get the name, they seem content without the substance. Everywhere, it matters not to what Church you turn your eye, you see a vast host of hypocrites, numerous as flies about a dead carcase. On all sides there are deceivers, and deceived; who write "Heaven" upon their brows, but have hell in their hearts; who hang out the sign of an angel over their doors, but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves; be not deceived, for he who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and he will surely discern between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not.

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus, that which has been revealed to us of the Holy Ghost by the apostles and prophets, and specially by the Messiah himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word "vain" in different shades of meaning. *It is no fiction; it is no trifle; it is no folly; it is no speculation.* In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence—"Because it is your life."

I. First, then, the true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in his person, his blood, and his righteousness, and which produces obedience to his commands, and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION.

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue, but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction *to us*. It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if

we be honest men, may prevail with others who may be sceptical upon this point. We say, then, that *the objects* of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction. *God the Father*, to whom we look with the spirit of adoption, is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the Divine Being is a mere abstraction. As to communing with him, as to speaking to him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, but to them such things are impossible. Now we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked unto him, and he has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with our friend, and have been answered by him. We tell you that to us the being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being, tell us that there is a God. We have had personal dealings with him; he has been with us in our chamber we have seen his face in the sanctuary; we have cast our cares upon him; and therefore to us the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction. So is it with *Christ Jesus*. To mere professors Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but he is only an historical personage to them. To true believers in Christ, however, he is a real person, now existing, and now dwelling in the hearts of his people. And oh! I bear my witness that if there be anything which has ever been certified to my consciousness it is the existence of Jesus, the man, the Son of God. Oh friends, have we not, when our soul has been in a rapture, thrust our finger into the print of the nails? Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world, that in spiritual communings we could say, He was to us as our brother that sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found him without we did embrace him, and we would not let him go. His left hand has been under our head, and his right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ be not one for whom you live, and in whom you dwell; with whom you walk, and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in his likeness. A real Christ and a real God—no man has real religion till he knows these. So again *the Holy Spirit*, who is, with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, indivisibly One and yet everlastingly Three—the Holy Spirit is also real, for

> "He, in our hearts of sin and woe
> Makes living streams of grace arise,
> Which into boundless glory flow."

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively. A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires, but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it; and the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have

ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism. Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in; when its strength is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things; their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight; and that at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very dust with weakness. They know that at times they enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and divine impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God, which make a man more than man, for he is filled with Deity from head to foot, and whose withdrawal makes him feel himself less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity, till he loatheth his own being. Tell us there is no Holy Spirit! We have seen his goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-bye, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy, but as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or viands which we can taste.

But further, we can also say that *the experience* which true religion brings is no fiction. Believe me, sirs, it is no fiction to *repent;* for there is a bitterness in it which makes it all too real. Oh, the agony of sin lying on an awakened conscience! If you have ever felt it, it will seem to you as the ravings of a madman when any shall tell you that religion is not real! When the great hammer of the law broke our hearts in pieces, it was a stern reality. These eyes have sometimes, before I knew the Saviour, been ready to start from my head with horror, and my soul has often been bowed down with a grief far too terrible ever to be told to my fellow-man, when I felt that I was guilty before God, that my Maker was angry with me, that he must punish me, and that I deserved and must suffer his eternal wrath. I do assure you there was no fiction there! And when the Spirit of God comes into the heart and takes all our grief away, and gives us *joy and peace in believing in Christ*, there is no fiction then. Of course, to other men this is no evidence, except they will believe our honesty; but to us it is the very best of evidence. We were bidden to believe on Christ; it was all we were to do: to look to his cross, to believe him to be the propitiation for sin, and to trust in him to save us; we did so, and oh, the joy of that moment! In one instant we leaped from the depths of hell to the very heights of heaven in experience; dragged up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, our feet were set upon a rock, and we could sing for very joy. Oh, the mirth! oh, the bliss! oh, the ecstacy of the soul that can say—

> "Happy, happy, happy day,
> When Jesus washed my sins away,
> Happy, happy, happy day."

That was no fiction, surely. If it be so, I will continue to cry, "Blessed fiction! blessed dream! may I contrive to believe thee;

may I always be so deluded if this is to be deluded and misled!" *Since then*, look at the believer's experience. He has had as many troubles as other men have, but oh, what comforts he has had! He lost his wife, and as he stood there and thought his heart would break, he could still say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Child after child sickened before his loving gaze, and as they went one after the other to the tomb where he often wished he could have slept instead of them—while he mourned and wept as Jesus did, yet still he could say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." When the house was burned—when the property vanished—when trade ran ill—when character was slandered—when the soul was desponding and all but despairing, yet there came in that one ray of light, "Christ is all, and all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." I can tell you, that Christians have often had their brightest days when other people thought they were in their darkest nights; and they have often had the best of dainties when there was a famine abroad. Is this a fiction? O sirs, we challenge you to find so blessed a fiction as this elsewhere! I saw last Friday a sight, enough to make one weep indeed: there in the back-room of the house, lay a fine youth, a member of this Church, sickening and near to death of consumption, and he talked to me joyously of his prospect of entering into the rest which remaineth for the people of God; there in the front-room, on the same floor, lay his sister, I suppose but some two years younger, withering under the same disease; and there sat the tender mother with her two children, thinking to lose them both within a few days, and though she said, it was natural to weep, yet she could say even under this sharp trial, "The Lord's name be magnified in it all." I say there was no fiction there. If you who think there is a fiction in such things could live among Christians—if you could see the poor cheerfully suffering—if you could mark the sick and how joyously they bear their pains—if you could see the dying and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, "There *is* a reality here; there *is* something in true religion; let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!"

But yet further; as we are sure there is a reality in the objects and in the experience of true godliness, so are we quite clear that there is a reality in its *privileges*. One of the privileges of the Christian is *prayer*. It is the believer's privilege, to go to God and ask for what he wants, and have it. Now, sirs, I am absolutely certain that prayer is a reality. I shall not tell here my own experience. One reads not his love-letters in the streets, one tells not his own personal dealings with God in public; but if there be a fact that can be proved by ten thousand instances, and which therefore no reasonable man has any right to doubt—if there be anything that is true under heaven, it is true that God hears prayer when it cometh not out of feigned lips, and is offered through Jesus Christ. I know when we tell the story out, men smile and say, "Ah, these were singular coincidences!" Why, I have seen in my life, answers to prayer so remarkable, that if God had rent the curtain of the heavens and thrust out his arm to work a deliverance, it could not have been more decidedly and distinctly a divine interposition than when he

listened to my feeble cry for help. I speak not of myself as though I were different from other men in this, for it is so with all who have real godliness. They know that God hears them; they prove it to-day; they intend to prove it at this very hour.

Communion with Christ is another reality. The shadow of his cross is too refreshing to be a dream, and the sunlight of his face is too bright to be a delusion. Precious Jesus! thou art a storehouse of substantial delights and solid joy. Then, the privileges of *Christian love towards one another* are real. I know they are not with some men. Why, look you at some of your fashionable Churches; if the poor people were to speak to the richer ones, what would the rich ones think of them? Why, snap their heads half off, and send them about their business! But where there is true Christianity, we feel that the only place in the world where there can ever be liberty, equality, and fraternity, is in the Church of Christ. To attempt this politically, is but to attempt an impossibility; but to foster it in the Church of God, where we are all allied to God, is but to nourish the very spirit of the gospel. I say there is a reality in Christian love, for I have seen it among my flock; and though some do not show it as they should, yet my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing.

Once more upon this point, for I am spending all my time here while I need it for other points. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing *if you look at its effects.* We will not take you abroad now to tell you of the effects of the gospel of Christ in the South Sea. We need not remind you of what it has done for the heathen, but let me tell you what it has done for men *here.* Ah! brethren, you will not mind my telling out some of the secrets, secrets that bring the tears to my eyes as I reflect upon them. When I speak of the thief, the harlot, the drunkard, the sabbath-breaker, the swearer, I may say "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye rejoice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many a man has been going by the door there, and has said "I'll go in and hear Old Spurgeon." He came in to make merriment of the preacher, and very little that troubles Asia. But the man has stood there until the Word has gone home to him, and he who was wont to beat his wife, and to make his home a hell, has before long been to see me, and has given me a grip of the hand and said, "God Almighty bless you, sir; there is something in true religion!" "Well, let us hear your tale," We have heard it, and delightful it has been in hundreds of instances. "Very well, send your wife, and let us hear what she says about you." The woman has come, and we have said "Well, what think you of your husband now, ma'am?" "Oh, sir, such a change I never saw in my life! He is so kind to us; he is like an angel now, and he seemed like a fiend before; Oh! that cursed drink, sir! everything went to the public-house; and then if I went up to the house of God, he did nothing but abuse me. Oh! to think that now he comes with me on Sunday; and the shop is shut up, sir; and the children who used to be running about without a bit of shoe or stocking, he takes them on his knee, and prays with them so sweetly. Oh! there is such a change!" Surly people say "Will it last? Will it last?"

Well, I have seen it last the eight years of my pastorate, in many cases, and I know it will last for ever, for I am persuaded that it is God's work. We will put it to all the Social Science Societies; we will put it to all the different religions under heaven, whether they know the art of turning sinners into saints; whether they can make lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. Why I know a man who was as stingy a soul as could be, once, and now he is as generous a man as walks God's earth. There is another, he was not immoral, but he was passionate, and now he is as quiet as a lamb. It is grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction! If religion does not prove itself to be true by these facts, then do not believe it; if it does not, when it comes into a neighbourhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the public-houses; if it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button. But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say, it is not a vain thing.

Besides, to the man who really possesses it, *it is his life*. He is not a man and a Christian, but he is all a Christian. He is not as some are, men and Members of Parliament, who have many things to attend to, and attend Parliament also; but the man who is thoroughly a Christian is a Christian every bit of him. He lives Christianity; he eats it; he drinks it; he sleeps it; he walks it. Wherever you see him, he has his religion. His religion is not like a man's regimentals which he can take off and go in undress; it is inside of him; it is woven right through and through him. When the shuttle of his religion was thrown, it went right through the core of his heart, and you must kill that man to get his religion out of him. Racks may tear his nerves and sinews, but they cannot tear away his hope, for it is essentially and vitally part and parcel of himself. Ah! my ladies and gentlemen, you who think religion is no more real than the life of a butterfly, it is you who are unreal in your fancies, and your follies; religion is the substance, and your life is only the shadow! Oh! you workingmen, who think that to be godly is but to indulge a dream, you know not what you say. All else is fiction but this; all else is but a moon-beam phantom, but this is sun-lit reality. God give you grace to get it, and then you will feel we have not spoken too strongly, but rather have spoken too little of that which is essentially and really true.

II. Secondly, "It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO TRIFLE.

If religion be false, it is the basest imposition under heaven; but if the religion of Christ be true, it is the most solemn truth that ever was known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it be true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it be not true it is detestable, but if it be true it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle. Briefly consider why it is not. *It deals with your soul.* If it dealt with your body it were no trifle, for it is well to have the limbs of the body sound, but it has to do with *your soul.* As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your *immortal* soul it deals with. Your soul has to live

for ever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as heaven and hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with. Consider also with whom it connects you—*with God*; before whom angels bow themselves and veil their faces. Is HE to be trifled with? Trifle with your monarch if you will, but not with the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Recollect that *those who have ever known anything of it* tell you it is no child's play. The *saints* will tell you it is no trifle to be converted. They will never forget the pangs of conviction, nor the joys of faith. They tell you it is no trifle to have religion, for it carries them through all their conflicts, bears them up under all distresses, cheers them under every gloom, and sustains them in all labour. They find it no mockery. The Christian life to them is something so solemn, that when they think of it they fall down before God, and say, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." And *sinners*, too, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. When they come to die they find it no little thing to die without Christ. When conscience gets the grip of them, and shakes them, they find it no small thing to be without a hope of pardon—with guilt upon the conscience, and no means of getting rid of it. And, sirs, *true ministers of God* feel it to be no trifle. I do myself feel it to be such an awful thing to preach God's gospel, that if it were not "Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel," I would resign my charge this moment. I would not for the proudest consideration under heaven know the agony of mind I felt but this one morning before I ventured upon this platform! Nothing but the hope of winning souls from death and hell, and a stern conviction that we have to deal with the grandest of all realities, would bring me here.

A pastor's office is no sinecure. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control, may well feel his responsibility; but he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door, must travail in birth, and know a mother's pangs; he must strive with God, and know an agony and yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we do assure you; oh! make it no trifle to yourselves. I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors. Oh! professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful, but oh! be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege; but oh! be heavenly-minded, for that is your duty. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to him. Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation, but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers to live to Christ, Christ also living in you.

III. But next, and very briefly, for time will fly; the religion of Christ is no vain thing—that is, IT IS NO FOLLY.

Thinking men! Yes, by the way, we have had thinking men who have been able to think in so circuitous a manner that they have thought it consistent with their consciences to profess to hold the doctrines of the Church of England, and to be Romanists or infidels! God deliver us from ever being able to think in their way! I always dislike the presence of a man who carries a gun with him which will

discharge shot in a circle. Surely he is a very ill companion, and if he should turn your enemy how are you to escape from him? Give me a straightforward, downright man, who says what he means, and means what he says, and I would sooner have the grossest reprobate who will speak plainly what he means, than I would have the most dandy of gentlemen who would not hurt your feelings, but who will profess to believe as you do, while in his heart he rejects every sentiment, and abhors every thought which you entertain. I trust I do not speak to any persons here who can think so circuitously as this. Still, you say, "Well, but the religion of Christ, why, you see, it is the poor that receive it." Bless God it is! "Well, but not many thinking people receive it." Now that is not true, but at the same time, if they did not we would not particularly mind, because all thinking people do not think aright, and very many of them think very wrongly indeed; but such a man as Newton could think and yet receive the gospel, and master-minds, whom it is not mine just now to mention, have bowed down before the sublimity of the simple revelation of Christ, and have felt it to be their honour to lay their wealth of intellect at the feet of Christ. But, sirs, where is the folly of true religion! Is it a folly to be providing for the world to come? "Oh, no." Is it a folly to make the Author of your being its first end? "No, no." Is it altogether a folly to believe that there is such a thing as justice? I trow not. And that if there be such a thing as justice it involves punishment? There is no great folly there. Well, then, is it any folly to perceive that there is no way of escaping from the effects of our offences except justice be satisfied? Is that folly? And if it be the fact that Christ has satisfied justice for all who trust in him, is it folly to trust him? If it be a folly to escape from the flames of hell, then let us be fools. If it be folly to lay hold of him who giveth us eternal life—oh, blessed folly! let us be more foolish still. Let us take deep dives into the depths of this foolishness. God forbid that we should do anything else but glory in being such fools as this for Christ's sake! What, sirs, is your wisdom? your wisdom dwells in denying what your eyes can see—a God; in denying what your consciences tell you—that you are guilty; in denying what should be your best hope, what your spirit really craves after—redemption in Christ Jesus. Your folly lies in following a perverted nature, instead of obeying the dictates of one who points you to the right path. You are wise and you drink poison; we are fools and we take the antidote. You are wise and you hunt the shadow; we are fools and we grasp the substance. You are wise, and you labour and put your money into a bag which is full of holes, and spend it for that which is not bread, and which never gives you satisfaction; and we are fools enough to be satisfied, to be happy, to be perfectly content with heaven and God—

> "I would not change my bless'd estate
> For all the world calls good or great;
> And while my faith can keep her hold,
> I envy not the sinner's gold."

Blessed folly! Oh, blessed folly! But it is not a foolish thing; for *it is your life.* Ah, sirs, if you would have philosophy it is in Christ. If

you would accomplish the proudest feat of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here the man whose mind makes him elephantine, may find depths in which he may swim. Here the most recondite learning shall find itself exhausted. Here the most brilliant imagination shall find its highest flights exceeded. Here the critic shall have enough to criticise throughout eternity; here the reviewer may review, and review again, and never cease. Here the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world; here men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which heaven, and earth, and hell can tell, may find it out, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God.

IV. And now for the last point, hurriedly again: "It is not a vain thing,"—that is, IT IS NO SPECULATION, no hap-hazard.

People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there; but I should like to know what you think about *yourselves*—will you be saved or not?—for after all that is a question of a deal more importance to you. Now the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it saves him. It is not a religion which offers him something which *perhaps* may save him; no it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man "Now I have set you a-going, you must keep on yourself." No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end. He that says "Alpha" never stops till he can say "Omega" over every soul. I say the religion of Christ: I know there are certain shadows of it which do not carry such a reality as this with them, but I say that the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ, is an absolute certainty. "Whosoever believeth on him hath eternal life, and he shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Well," says one, "I should like to know what this very sure religion is." Well, it is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ with all that you have and you shall be saved. "Well," says one, "but when?" Why, now, here, this morning, on the spot: you shall be saved now. It is not a vain thing; it is not a speculation, for it is true to you *now*. The word is nigh thee; on thy lip and in thy heart. If thou wilt with thy heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved, and saved now. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is a great and glorious truth, and it is true to-day—"Whosoever believeth in him *hath* everlasting life." "But is it true to me?" saith one. My text says, "It is not a vain thing for *you*." "Oh, it will suit other people; it will not do for me." It will suit *you*, sir—"It is not a vain thing *for you*, because it is your life." If you have come up from the country, it is no vain thing for you, my dear friends; if you reside in town, amidst its

noise and occupations, it is not a vain thing for you, my dear hearers. It is not a vain thing for any; if you do but lay hold of it, and it lays hold of you—if you receive the reality and vitality of it into your soul, be you who you may, it will not be a vain thing to you; not a "perhaps" and an "if," a "but" and a "peradventure," but a "shall" and a "will," a divine, an eternal, an everlasting and immutable certainty. Whosoever believeth in Christ—let the earth shake; let the mountains rock; let the sun grow old with age, and the moon quench her light—shall be saved. Unless God can change his mind—and that is impossible; unless God can break his word—and to say so is blasphemy; unless Christ's blood can lose its efficacy—and that can never be; unless the Spirit can be anything but Eternal and Omnipotent—and to suppose so were ridiculous—he that believeth on Christ, must at last, before the eternal throne, sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb. "Well," says one, "'tis a vain thing, I'm sure, to me, for I'm only a poor working-man; religion no doubt, is a very fine thing for gentlefolk, but it doesn't do for a man as has to work hard, for he's something else to think on." Well, you are just the man that I should think it would do for. Why, it is little enough you have here, my dear friend, and that is the very reason why you should have eternal joys hereafter. If there be one man that religion can bless more than another—and I do not know that there is—it is the poor man in his humble cot. Why, this will put sweets into your cup; this will make your little into enough, and sometimes into more than enough; you shall be rich while you are poor, and happy when others think you are miserable. "Well," says the rich man, "it is nothing to me; I do not see that it will suit me." Why, it is the very thing *for you*, sir; in fact, you are the man who ought to have it, because, see what you will have to lose when you die, unless you have religion to make up for it! What a loss it will be for you when you have to lose all your grandeur and substance! What a loss it will be for you to go from the table of Dives to the hell of Dives! Surely it is not a vain thing *for you*. "Well," says another, "but I am a moral and upright person; indeed, I do not think anybody can pull my character to pieces." I hope nobody wants to; but this is not a vain thing for you, because, let me tell you, that fine righteousness of yours is only fine in your own esteem. If you could only see it as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of holes as ever beggars' rags were when at last they were consigned to the dust-heap. I say your fine righteousness, my lady, and yours, Sir Squire from the country, no matter though you have given to the poor, and fed the hungry, and done a thousand good things; if you are relying on them, you are relying on rotten rags, in which God can no more accept you than he can accept the thief in his dishonesties. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing." It is not a vain thing for you, then. "Oh, but I am a young man just in my teens, and growing up to manhood; I think I ought to have a little pleasure." So I think, friend, and if you want a great deal of it, be a Christian. "Oh, but I think young people should enjoy themselves." So do I. I never was an advocate for making sheep without their first being lambs, and I would let the lambs skip as much as they like; but if you want to lead a happy and a joyous life,

give your young days to Jesus. Who says that a Christian is miserable? Sir, you lie; I tell you to your teeth that you know not what Christianity is, or else you would know that the Christians are the most joyous people under heaven. Young man, I would like you to have a glorious youth; I would like you to have all the sparkle and the brilliance which your young life can give you. What have you better than to live and to enjoy yourself? But how are you to do it? Give your Creator your heart, and the thing is done. It is not a vain thing for you. "Ah!" says the old man, "but it is a vain thing for me; my time is over; if I had begun when I was a lad it might have done; but I am settled in my habits now; I feel sure, sir, it is too late for me; when I hear my grand-children say their prayers as they are going to bed, pretty dears, when they are singing their evening hymn, I wish I was a child again; but my heart has got hard, and I cannot say 'Our Father' now; and when I do get to 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' I get stuck there, I do not know how to get over that, for I have not forgiven old Jones yet who robbed me in that law-suit; and then you know I am infirm, and have these rheumatics, and a hundred other pains; I do not think religion will suit me." Well, it is just the very thing that will suit you, because it will make you young again. What, "Can a man be born again when he is old?" That is what Nicodemus asked. Yes, a man can be born again, so that the babe shall die a hundred years old. Oh! to make the autumn of your life and the coming winter of your last days into a new spring and a blessed summer—this is to be done by laying hold of Christ now; and then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, "I count the years I lived before *a death*, but now I begin to live."

I do not know whether I have picked out every character; I am afraid I have not; but this thing I know, though you may be under there, or up in the corner yonder where my eye cannot reach you, yet you may hear this voice, and I hope you may hear it when you are gone from this house back to your country-towns and to your houses—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.

After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity!
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end."

And this is the gospel which is preached unto you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that is trust him—"and thou shalt be saved." May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 29TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isaiah liii. 12.

A VAGUE notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ's passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors, would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick. There is in most sinners' consciences, when they are aroused, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that he must have intended the merit of his blood and the efficacy of his passion for those who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to him. Dear friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture. Consider the *plan* itself. It was a plan of salvation and of necessity; it was intended to bless sinners. Wherefore salvation if men be not lost, and for whom salvation but for the ruined? The plan was based in grace, but how "*grace*" unless it was meant for persons who deserve nothing? If you have to deal with creatures who have not sinned, and have been obedient, what need of grace? Build then on justice; let merit have its way. But as the whole covenant is a covenant of grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners and not with the righteous. Moreover, think of the *work* itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, think you? For those who had a righteousness? That were a superfluity. Why should he weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine linen? He had, moreover, to shed his blood. For whom his blood? Wherefore the agony in the garden? Wherefore the cry upon the cross? For the perfect? Surely not, beloved. What need had they of an atonement? Verily, brethren, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that he came into the world to save *sinners*. And then look at *God's end* in the whole work.

It was to glorify himself, but how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory by grace those who could have entered heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making his love and his mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity, that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners, or else that end and aim never could be accomplished. Salvation needs a sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship; the precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge; the atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of it away; and it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God, to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there be sinners to be the instruments of God's glory through being the partakers of God's grace. A moment's thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that "Jesus Christ died for the ungodly." Indeed, dear friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly before us that we see Jesus in his glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to pourtray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters; but if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains; let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders rejoicing; let me hear his song of mirth when he calleth upon his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost. When looks our God most like a loving and tender father? Truly he looketh blessed when he divideth his inheritance among his sons, but I never saw him so resplendent in his fatherhood as when he runneth out to meet the prodigal, throweth his arms about his neck, and kisseth him, crying—"My son that was dead is alive again." Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people? Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous unless there be sin in the world, and sinners whom Jesus came to save. Brethren, how is he a Saviour except to the lost? How is he a physician but to the sick? How is he like the brazen serpent if he doth not save the sin-bitten, or how the scapegoat if he doth not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there be a sinner, and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience. "He was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people who think they have no sin and they cannot appreciate the text; in fact it can have no meaning to them.

I. We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors."

In what sense are we to understand this? "He was numbered with the transgressors."

He was numbered with them, first, *in the census of the Roman empire.* There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that he may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors, and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world and is numbered with transgressors *in the scroll of fame.* Ask public rumour "What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?" and it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for him. "This ———" they sometimes said; and our translators have inserted the word "fellow" because in the original there is an ellipsis, the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus. Fame, with her lying tongue, said he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber, because he would not yield to the asceticism of the age. He would not, since he came to be a man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did. He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance; he came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber." They called him mad. His warm enthusiasm, his stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high places, brought upon him the accusation that he had a devil. "Thou hast a devil and art mad," said they. They called the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunkards made him their song, and the vilest thought him viler than themselves, for he was, by current rumour, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, "he was numbered with transgressors in the *courts of law.*" The ecclesiastical court of Judaism, the Sanhedrim, said of him, "Thou blasphemest;" and they smote him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God and against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The courts civil also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water, and say, "I find no fault in him," but still, driven by the infernal clamours of an angry people, he is compelled to write, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;" and he gives him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land. Herod, too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, *the whole Jewish people* numbered him with transgressors; nay, they reprobated him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. Barabbas is put in competition

with Christ, and they say, "Not this man, but Barabbas." See, brethren, his being numbered with transgressors is no fiction. Lo, he bears the transgressor's scourging! He is tied to the whipping-post, his back is marred and scarred; the ploughers make deep furrows, and the blood flows in streams. He is numbered with transgressors, for he bears the felon's cross; he comes into the street bowed down with the weight of his own gibbet, which he must carry upon his raw and bleeding shoulders; he goes along to the place of doom; he comes to Calvary—the place of a skull—and there, hoisted upon the cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected him and heaven refused him shelter, he dies the ignominious death of the cross, and is thus numbered with transgressors. But will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eye pity? Will no man declare his innocence? None; they are all silent! Silent, did I say? 'Tis worse! All earth holds up its hands for his death; it is carried unanimously. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there. They thrust out the tongue; they hoot; they laugh; they cry, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe; for he is despised and rejected of men; *of all men* is he accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief. But will not heaven interfere? O God, upon thy throne, wilt thou let the innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree, and cries in agony, "I thirst." Wilt thou permit this man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is; heaven confirms it. He has no sin of his own, but he has the sin of his people upon his shoulders; and God, the Eternal Judge, shows that he too considers him to be in the roll of transgressors, for he veils his face; and the Eternal Father betakes him to his hiding-place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of his Father's face, till he shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer's soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The only answer from heaven being, "I must forsake transgressors; thou art numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake thee." But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, he will be taken down ere he dies? Death is the curse for sin; it cannot come on any but transgressors; it is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated. Surely, then, the Lord will deliver his Son at the last moment, and having tried him in the furnace, he will bring him out? Nay, not so; he must become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or heaven, or hell: he that was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor's crown of thorns, lies in the trangressor's grave. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." It is a marvellous thing, brethren, a marvellous thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more marvellous than that would be. Here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of men (that were a gracious act) but numbered with transgressors; numbered, not with the faithful who struggle after purity; numbered, not with those who repel temptation and resist sin; numbered, not with those who earn unto them-

selves a good degree and much boldness in the faith—that were a marvellous condescension; but here it is written, "He was numbered *with the transgressors.*"

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and wonderful thing, and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, think you, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because *he could the better become their advocate.* I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counsellor continually using the word "we;" he is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law, there is on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counsellor with the client; nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there himself. The trumpet sounds; the great assize is set. Come, come, ye sinners, come to the bar to be tried. There stands the man whose hands are pierced; he standeth numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation? He stands to answer it; he points to his side, his hands, his feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the sinners whom he represents; he pleads his blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit, for he at their head hath found a ransom."

But there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, *that he might plead with them.* Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good, imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out of his abundant love to these prisoners he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity; but he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done aught that is wrong?" "I will not answer you that," saith he; "but if you will just refer to the calendar you will find my name there; I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they open their hearts now! They opened their eyes with wonder first, but now they open their hearts, and they say, "Art thou become like one of us? Then we will talk with thee." And he begins to plead with them. Sinner, dost thou see this? Christ puts himself as near on a level with thee as he can. He cannot be sinful as thou art, for he is God and perfect man; but he so puts his name down in the list that when the roll is called his name is called over with thine. Oh, how near doth he come to thee in thy ruined state!

Then he does this that *sinners may feel their hearts drawn to him.* What, dost thou become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesu, Son of God, dost thou allow thyself to be numbered among lost ones that thou mightest find me? Oh, then my soul shall open itself to give thee a hearty reception. Come in, thou loving Saviour, abide with me, and go no more out for ever. There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ; but who will be afraid of a man that is numbered with us, and

put down in the same list with us? Surely now we may come boldly to him, and confess our guilt. He that is numbered with us cannot condemn us. He whose name is down in the same indictment with ourselves, cometh not to condemn, but to absolve; not to curse, but to bless.

He was put down in the transgressors' list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints.* He was holy, and written among the holy; we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty; he transfers his name from yonder list to this black indictment, and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious, for there is a transfer made between Christ and his people. All that we have goes to Christ, sin and all; and all that Christ has comes to us. His righteousness, his blood, and everything that he hath belongeth unto us.

Dear hearers, before I leave this point I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is wanted here; nothing else. "He was numbered with transgressors." Oh, soul, can thy heart say, "Then if he was numbered with me, if he put his name down where mine stands in that terrific roll, then I will believe in him that he is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in his hands?" I conjure thee by the living God do it, man, and thy soul is saved. Oh, by him who from the highest throne in glory stooped to the cross of deepest ignominy, trust thy soul with him. It is all he asks of thee, and this he gives thee. Blessed Master, would that thou couldst stand here, and say, "Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with you; God accounted me as if I had committed your sin, and visited me as if I had been a transgressor; trust me; cast your souls upon my perfect righteousness; wash in my cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before my Father's face."

II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BARE THE SINS OF MANY."

Here it is as clear as noon-day, that Christ dealt with *sinners.* Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description given. It is clear, I say, to everyone that chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty. Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again: man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest hell; Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the room, place, and stead of his people; and he did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins—that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction, but really transferred from them to him. You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back; it is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word "bear," implies weight, and weight is the sure indicator of reality. Christ did bear sin in its fulness, vileness, and condemnation upon his own shoulders. Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject. Christ did really, literally, and truly, take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on him, and those sins did actually and in very deed become his sins; (not that he had committed them, nor that he had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation

to which he had consented, and for which he came into the world,) and there lay the sins of all his people upon Christ's shoulders.

Then notice, that as he did bear them, so other texts tell us that *he did bear them away.* "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Sin being on his head, the scape-goat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness. If it be sought for it shall not be found; the Everlasting God seeth it no more, it hath ceased to be, for he hath finished iniquity and made an end of sin; and when there is an end of it what more can be said? Christ took our debts, but he was not long before he paid them all. Where, then, are the debts? There are no debts now; there is not one in God's book against his chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ hath paid the debt, then there is no debt left; it is gone. I can rejoice in its discharge; I can mourn that ever I cast myself into such a position, but the debt itself is gone. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea." And yet again, "I will put away thy sin like a cloud, and thine iniquity like a thick cloud." Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain; they are gone; no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again; there are no such things; they are gone. And so with believers' sins, they were black, thick, thick clouds; full of tempests; big with lightnings and with thunder; but they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ; the thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon him, and the clouds are gone, for Christ has taken them away. "He bare the sins of many," and he bore them away for ever.

And then, beloved, you must understand that if it be so, if Christ did really bear his people's sins, and did bear them away—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, *there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died.* "And who are they?" you say. Why, all those who trust him. Any man whatsoever, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ. Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given. I can only sing out again with Kent—

> "Sons of God, redeemed by blood,
> Raise your songs to Zion's God—
> Made from condemnation free,
> Grace triumphant sing with me."

Now, do you not see that this must be for sinners? See, you black ones, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners. You see it does not say it was for *sensible* sinners; no, no, but sinners. It does not say, "He was numbered with *awakened* transgressors;" no, it is "transgressors." It does not say that he bare the sins of tender-hearted sinners; no, but "he bare the sin of many." This is the only description I can find in my text. Jesus Christ came into the world to save

sinners, and if in very deed and truth I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ, and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away. Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. "Oh," says one, "I am a sinner, but, but——." Well, what but? If you be a sinner, you are commanded to trust Christ this morning. "Oh, but——." I will have no "buts," sir, no "but" whatever. Are you a sinner? Yes or no. If you say "No," then I have nothing to say to you; Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a sinner, to you is the Word of this salvation sent. "But I have been a thief!" I suppose a thief is a sinner? "But I have been a drunkard!" A drunkard is a sinner. "But I have been an unclean liver!" You are a sinner, then. "But I have such a hard heart!" Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world. "But I am unbelieving!" Well, that is a sin too. You come in under the list of sinners, and I say that such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when he came to save, for "he was numbered with transgressors," and "he bare"—not the virtues of many, not the merits of many, not the good works of many, but "the sin of many." So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the sin-bearer; and if you are a sinner, here is Christ numbered with you. "Oh!" says one, "but what is faith? I want to know at once." Faith, sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus now. Saving faith can sing this verse—

> "Just as I am, and waiting not
> To rid my soul of one foul blot,
> To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
> O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

It is as sinners, not as sensible sinners, not as repenting sinners, that Jesus died for us. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and called; in fact, for them, and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world.

III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. "And made intercession for the transgressors."

He prays for his saints, but, dear friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more.

What does our text say? He intercedes for transgressors! There is a transgressor here this morning. He has been hearing the gospel for many years—for many years; and he has heard it preached faithfully too. He is growing grey now; but while his head is getting white his heart is black; he is an old hard-hearted reprobate, and by-and-bye, unless grace prevents —— but I need not tell that story. What is that I hear? The feet of justice, slowly but surely coming. I hear a voice saying—"Lo, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" The woodman feels his axe; it is sharp and keen. "Now," says he, "I will lay to at this barren tree, and cut it down." But hark! There is one that maketh intercession for transgressors, hear him, hear him, "Spare it yet a little while, till I

dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit *well;* but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down." You see there was nothing in that tree why he should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why he should plead for you, yet he does it. This very morning, perhaps, he is crying "Spare him yet a little while; let him hear the gospel again; let him be entreated once more; oh! let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel; let me have another endeavour with his hard heart; it may be, it may be that he will yield." O sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way.

But that done, he *pleads for their forgiveness.* They are nailing him to the cross; the wretches are driving iron through his hands; but even while they fasten him to the tree hear him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, I spoke to a brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love has touched. He had been a great blasphemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart; and it broke mine too, to think that I could rebel against Christ whilst he was loving me; that I could despise him while he was putting himself in my way in order to do me good. Oh! it is this that breaks a man's heart; to think that Christ should have been loving me, with the whole force of his soul, while I was despising him, and would have nothing to do with him. There is a man there who has been cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming, and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying "Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does." O sinner, I would this might break thy heart, and bring thee to the Saviour.

Nor does he end there. He next prays *that those for whom he intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them.* "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive." Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of his intercession for transgressors. His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live. When they live he does not cease to pray for them, for by his intercession *they are preserved.* They are tempted and tried, but hear what he says. "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy strength fail not." Yes, brethren, beloved, and this is the reason *why we are not condemned,* for our Apostle puts it—"Who is he that condemneth?" and the answer he gives is, "Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, who ever maketh intercession for us;" as if that intercession choked at once the advocate of hell, and delivered us from condemnation. And more, *our coming to glory* is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners "Go home and pray; go home and pray." That is very good advice, but it is not the gospel. The sinner might answer me, "How can I come before God as I am; I cannot plead before him, for I am a wretch undone; if I should stand in his presence he would drive me from him."

Behold Jesus Christ maketh intercession for transgressors. It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client, certainly it is so in heaven. But when Christ comes in, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, he takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of him who is the advocate of his people than he knows that his case is lost, and that the sinner will go free. So, sinner, you are safe if he pleads for you. "Ah," say you, "but if he asks me what he should plead I have nothing to tell him." You know the counsellor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner—"Now, just tell me the case; what can I say in your favour?" The criminal replies, "Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so," and perhaps he is able to say "Why, sir, I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the whole affair, and I can prove an *alibi*, or I can do this or that." Very well; the advocate having ground to go upon, pleads the case in the court right confidently. But now I hear you say, "Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus Christ what he is to plead, for I have nothing to plead; the fact is I am guilty, and thoroughly guilty too, and I deserve to be punished, and must be; I have nothing to plead." Now what does our blessed Advocate say? "Oh," saith he, "but I have the plea in myself;" and up he rises in the court of law, and when the accusation is read he puts in this to that accusation—"In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne." "How?" saith Justice. And he shows the nail-prints in his hands, and lays bare his side, and says, "I suffered for that sinner; I was punished with the sinner's punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of my passion and my agony, that the sinner should go his way." Do you not see that Christ is a precious pleader because he can appear for us, and what is more, he can find a plea for us. "Ah!" I hear you say, "but I have no means of getting such an advocate as that; I wish I had, but I have nothing to give him; if he asks any fees I have nothing; I do not deserve the love of Christ; I do not know why he should take up my cause; if he would I should be saved, but I cannot think he will, for I cannot hope to pay him." "Nay," says he, "but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully, and I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you need it; not because you are not a transgressor, but because you are." That very thing, sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why he will. You are full of disease. "Ah!" say you, "the physician will never look at such an arm as that;" but because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, "I will cure that." Your qualification is your disqualification, and what you think to be the reason why he never will look at you, is certainly the only reason you can plead why he should. You are nothing; you are utterly lost; you have no merit; you have nothing unless the Lord Jesus Christ make prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors.

I come to a conclusion reluctantly; but I must say these few words. There are some of you that make very light of sinning. I pray you be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God

to save a sinner, for the Son of God himself must be numbered with sinners, and smart and die for sinners, or else they could not be saved. Touch not the unclean thing; hate it. If it is deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you. Oh! pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of the river when it was turned to blood in their sight.

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word: you know what sin means; I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence: I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea that Christ wants any preparation by you or in you before you come to him. You may come to him now; nay, more, you are *commanded* to come to him now, just as you are. And to every man among you to-day, and to every woman and child, I preach this gospel in the name of Jesus Christ: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him now—in your seat—standing in the aisles—crowded in these galleries—trust him now; God commands you. "This is *the* commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." As Peter said, so say I, "Repent and be converted, every one of you;" and as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." If you do not, this shall condemn you; not your sin, but your unbelief; for they that believe not are condemned already, Why, why are such condemned? Because they believe not. That is the accusation; that is the damning crime and curse. "Well," says one, "then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I'll do it." Ah! soul, do it then. Can you do it? Can you trust him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up. Are you depending a little on what you mean to do? Give that up. Do you trust him wholly? Can you say, "His blessed wounds, his flowing blood, his perfect righteousness, on these I rest. I do trust him, wholly?" Are you half afraid to say you do? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it then; do a bold thing for once! Say, "Lord, I'll trust thee, and if thou cast me away, I'll still trust thee; I bless thee that thou canst save me, and that thou wilt save me." Can you say that? I say, have you believed in him? You are saved, then; you are not in a salvable state, but you are saved; not partly, but wholly saved; not some of your sins blotted out, but all; behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But I hear one say, "It is too good to be true!" Soul, wilt thou be lost through thinking little things of Christ? "Ah!" says another, "it is too simple; if this be the gospel, we shall have all the ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ and being saved." And glory be to God if it be so! For my part I am never afraid of big sinners being saved. I would have every harlot, I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved. I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh! no; faith in Christ would change their nature; and it will change yours too; for this is salvation: to have the nature changed, to be made a new creature in Christ, and to be made holy. Come, soul, wilt thou trust him? I do not like you all to go away after

crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival; but here is better music if you trust Christ, for you shall hear the bells of heaven ringing, and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a brother redeemed. Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition; but here is a greater wonder than that, if you came into this place this morning in a state of nature, and go out in a state of grace, only to wait a little while, and then to reach a state of glory! Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show; but here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture; here is food for your souls; here is that whereof if a man eateth he shall live for ever; and here it is held out to you. Nothing can be plainer. Trust Christ and you are saved. Outside in the street there is a drinking-fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty go to it; you will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will cry, "You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress." "You must not drink because you wear a fustian jacket." No, no, go and drink; and when you have hold of the ladle and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt—"I do not feel my thirst enough," still take a drink whether you do or not. So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and he inviteth every thirsty soul to come and drink. You need not stop and say, "Am I thirsty enough? Am I black enough?" You do want it whether you think you do or not. Come as you are; come as you are. Every fitness is legality; every preparation is a lie; every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way. You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better. You are like a boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before. Leave the blots alone. Come as you are. If you are the blackest soul out of hell, trust Christ, and that act of trust shall make you clean. This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring you to it; so hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ. Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, "It is too good to be true;" or else you despise it because it is so simple; for the gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness, and no beauty in it that they should desire it. Oh! may the Holy Ghost lay this home to you; may he make you willing in the day of his power. I hope he has; I trust he has, so that ere we go we may all join in singing this one verse, and then separate;—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength, my righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 6TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere (or unadulterated) milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."—1 Peter ii. 1—3.

"IF so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." "*If, if:*" then this is not a thing to be taken for granted concerning every one of the human race. "If:" then there is a possibility and a probability that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "If, if:" then this is not a general but a special mercy; and it becomes our business to enquire whether we are comprehended in that company, who know the grace of God by inward experience. There is no spiritual favour which may not be a matter for heart-searching. At the very summit of holy delight, we meet the challenge of sentinel "If."—"If ye then be risen with Christ;" and at the very bottom, even at Repentance-gate itself, he meets us with a warrant of arrest until he sees whether our sorrow is the godly sorrow that needeth not to be repented of. "If thou be the Son of God," is not always a temptation of the devil, but often a very healthy enquiry most fittingly suggested by holy anxiety to men who would build securely upon the Rock of Ages. If at the Lord's Table itself it is proper for us to say, "Lord, is it I?" when there is a Judas in the company; and if after the most intimate fellowship Christ exclaimed, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"—let no enjoyment of ordinances, let no high and rapt fellowship which we may have known, exempt us from the great duty of proving ourselves whether we be in the faith. But, beloved, albeit this should be a matter of heart-searching, I take it that no man ought to be content whilst there is any such thing as an "if" about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. I can understand believers saying—

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought—
> Do I love the Lord or no?
> Am I his, or am I not?"

but I do not understand their being comfortable while their souls are under such suspense. I can comprehend the doubts which arise

from jealousy and holy distrust, but I cannot understand the continuance of those doubts, without a desperate struggle to clasp the Saviour with the hands of faith, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Do not rest, O believer, till thou hast a full assurance of thine interest in Christ. Let nothing satisfy thee till, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with thy spirit, thou art certified that thou art a child of God. Oh, trifle not here; let no "perhaps," and "peradventure," and "if," and "may be," satisfy thy soul. Build on eternal verities, and verily build upon them. Get the sure mercies of David, and surely get them. Let thine anchor be cast into that which is within the veil, and see to it that thy soul be linked to the anchor by a cable that will not break. Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus, I exhort and stir you up to get beyond these dreary "ifs;" abide no more in the howling wilderness of doubts and fears; cross the Jordan of distrust, and enter the Canaan of peace, where the Canaanite still lingers, but which ceaseth not to flow with milk and honey.

Our text mentions a *taste*—"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;" and the apostle speaks of *the duty* of those men of taste who have received this special favour. These two things shall take up our time this morning—*the taste*, and *the duties arising out of it;* and before we conclude, we shall go back to the Psalm with which we commenced this morning, and address those who as yet have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, in the words of David—"O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

I. First, then, TASTE is prominent in the text.

I scarcely need observe, that in Scripture, the Holy Ghost uses natural things as figures by which to set forth spiritual mysteries. Inasmuch as our language was ordained to speak the thoughts of the mind, and to describe the things of the body, it is not fitted in itself for the utterance of the things of the spirit. As much as the soul is higher than the body, so much superior is the spirit (that is, the new principle implanted in regeneration) to the mere soul which every man possesses; and, as you will clearly see, if our speech had only been made for the body, and had not been adapted for a being that had a soul, we should have been strangely embarassed for the expression of our mental emotions; and now, as our speech only reacheth unto the natural soul, if we would speak of the higher thoughts and impulses of the inner and newborn spirit, we can only do so by using the words we employ concerning natural objects. In this way we do not so much describe spiritual things as they are in themselves, but bring them down to our comprehension. When we shall become pure spirit, we may have a spiritual language; when we are caught up to the third heaven, we shall use those words which now are not lawful for a man to utter, spiritual words fitted for spiritual things.

1. *The taste here meant is doubtless faith.* Faith, in the Scripture, is all the senses. It is *sight.* "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." It is *hearing:* "Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the

sure mercies of David." Faith hears the voice of the Spirit in effectual calling: for the dead hear the voice of God, and "they that hear shall live." Faith is also *smelling*. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;" "thy name is as ointment poured forth;" "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me." Faith is also *touch*. By this faith the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ's garment, and by this we handle the things of the good word of life. Faith is equally the spirit's *taste*. "How sweet are thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my lips." "Except a man eat my flesh," saith Christ, "and drink my blood, there is no life in him." We shall have an inward and spiritual apprehension of the sweetness and preciousness of Christ, as the result of living faith.

2. The taste here meant is faith *in one of its highest operations*. One of the first performances of faith is hearing. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone, but with the inward ear; we hear it as God's Word, and we believe it to be so; that is the hearing of faith. Then our mind looketh upon the truth as it is presented to us; that is to say, we understand it; we see what it means; that is the seeing of faith. Then we perceive its preciousness to others, if not to ourselves; we begin to admire it, and find how fragrant it is; that is faith in its smell. Then comes the appropriating act by which we lay hold of the mercies that are proffered us in Christ; that is faith in its touch. Then come enjoyments, peace, delight, communion; which are faith in its taste. Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ's voice as the very voice of God in the soul will save us; but that which gives the true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, becomes assimilated to us; we feed on him; he cometh into us and becometh part of us; his living word sustaineth us, and his precious blood cheereth us as generous wine. Do you ask, "In what respect does faith *taste* that the Lord is gracious?" It is faith operating by experience. Dear Christian friends, you remember the time, when laden with guilt and full of fears, you looked to Jesus Christ, it was the eye of faith which looked. After a while Christ's sweet love assured you that your sins were forgiven, and you felt a calm in your soul, such as you had never known before. That was tasting Christ. You knew his sweetness; you knew the power there was in him to take the bitterness out of your mouth, and to put in sweetness instead thereof. Since that time you have been in trouble, but you have tasted Christ, for he has comforted you, and lifted up upon you the light of his countenance. You have been often greatly tried, but he has sustained you, and you have experienced that he is a very present help in time of trouble. Temptation has assailed you, but you have been able to meet it by "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" and perhaps even to-day your soul is as full as it can hold, of delightful contemplations of the loveliness, the faithfulness, the affection, the power, and the glory of your precious Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is what is meant by tasting; it is enjoying Christ by an act of faith, and finding him to be the altogether lovely, sweet, and precious One. It is something more than believing Christ to be precious; it is perceiving his worth, appreciating his sweetness, enjoying his loveliness; it is lying with his left hand under our head,

while his right hand doth embrace us. Thrice happy is the man who has thus tasted that the Lord is gracious. Follow me, while by a figure I make this point clear as noonday. There is a rumour running through the camp of Israel, that God on the morrow, at the rising of the sun, will feed his people. The rumour is believed; that is faith as *hearing*. Israel has heard that God will feed, and Israel believeth. See now; ere day-break the hosts of Israel hasten to the borders of the camp, and they see lying upon the ground certain grains like coriander seed. "This, this," say they, "is the food that God hath sent to us." That is faith as *seeing*. They take it up in their hands; they examine it, and feel of what sort it is. That is faith as the *touch*. They put it to their nostrils; they ascertain somewhat of its character by the very smell. This is faith judging and discerning as *smell*. But lo! they place it in their mouths, and one of them saith, "It tastes like wafers made with honey;" and another saith "It is as fresh oil." This is faith enjoying, for now they have come, not to hear of, nor see, nor smell, nor touch alone, but men do *eat* angel's food, and are fed even to the full. Here you see faith in its progressive works ending by the high degree of tasting.

3. Faith as exhibited to us under the aspect of tasting, *is a sure and certain mark of grace in the heart. It is a sure sign of vitality.* Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. See if the dead can taste. Bring the most pungent drugs; do these arouse the palate? Give them a foul draught, and see if nausea can be produced. Now, put sweets to the dead man's tongue; do the eyes glisten? It is long since that corpse has fed; does it show any satisfaction in the presence of food? No; it is dead, and taste has fled with the once sentient soul. Verily, brethren, no man can taste of Christ in his natural estate, and if you or I know Christ to be precious, we may be sure that we are alive through the Holy Ghost. We may not be able to say when the Spirit of God came into us; perhaps this may be a trouble to us, that we do not know the day when we were quickened from our death in sin; but, dear friend, the life itself is there. Dost thou enjoy Christ? Is his name sweet music to thee? Oh! canst thou roll the doctrine of his atonement under thy tongue as a sweet morsel? Say, is his flesh food to thee? Dost thou rejoice in his redemption? Then thou art alive, for no dead soul ever could taste heavenly things, and to taste that the Lord is good is a certain evidence that the quickening Spirit abideth in thee. Or, to put it in another light; if men have a taste of Christ, *it is certain evidence of a divine change*, for men by nature find no delight in Jesus. Books of surgery tell us of a few persons without taste, but the cure for such unfortunates is unknown; their infirmity is beyond the reach of drugs or surgery. If a man should be without hearing, the surgeon might, perhaps, effectually operate; or if blind, the film might be removed from the visual orb; but if without taste, the defect is beyond the range of mortal power. So, if any man hath a taste for Christ, inasmuch as he had it not by nature, and he could not have obtained it of himself, for his is a case out of the pale of human ability; that same Christ who raised the dead, must have given this holy taste to the tasteless palate and tongue of the sinner. I do not enquire what your experience may

have been, or may not have been; if Christ be precious to you, there has been a work of grace in your heart; if you love him, if his presence be your joy, if his blood be your hope, if his glory be your object and aim, and if his person be the constant love of your soul, you could not have had this taste by nature, for you were dead; you could not have acquired this taste by learning, for this is a miracle which none but the God who is supreme over nature could have wrought in you. Let every tried and troubled Christian, who nevertheless, does taste that the Lord is good, take consolation from this simple remark.

4. In the next place; this taste, where it has been bestowed by grace, *is a discerning faculty.* There have been instances of persons who could not discern between the various flavours. A man was well known to a certain surgeon, who could just detect the distinction between the smell of garlic and the fragrance of a rose, but was quite incapable of knowing any difference between the perfume of a rose and of a lily; and the same person in feeding could never distinguish between different meats or drinks, except between the more pungent and rancid, and the more exquisitely sweet. Now, there are some Christians of that kind, who have some taste for Christ, but their taste is not very discerning. You may preach to them a doctrine of "ifs," and "ans," and "buts," and if it be warmly delivered and well disguised, they will hardly know what they are taking. Then, on another occasion, you may give them the sure mercies of David—"shalls," and "wills," and everlasting verities, and oaths, and covenants, and they like that too; for they have not yet, by reason of use, become able to discern between truth and error. Yet, mark you, there was never yet a Christian who did not know the difference between the Rose of Sharon and the garlic of Egypt; there was never yet a man renewed by grace who did not soon discover the difference between works and gospel; between law and grace; between the dead efforts of the flesh, and the living power of the quickening Spirit of the living God. I have noticed that some Christians in these modern times have but little taste, and do you know to what I have ascribed it? I think they have taken a cold, and have thus lost very much of their power of taste. Oh, how many believers there are who sit in the draught of worldliness till they get stiff-necks of carnal pride, and lose their taste for heavenly things! Besides, if a man will ruin his palate with the high-spiced viands of earth, it is little marvel that when he cometh back to his natural food, Christ Jesus, he should have lost some of his delight in divine things! Now, I know there are some professors who have such a taste for worldly joys, that it is no marvel that they cannot so well discern the divine and exquisite pleasure that is in Christ Jesus, when he is fed upon by the spirit. Yet again, I say, though the degree of discernment may vary, there is a discerning power in faith as taste. If thou canst feed on a religion which gives thee ceremonies to trust to, thou hast never tasted that the Lord is gracious. If, my hearer, thou canst live upon a gospel which leads thee to depend upon thyself, thou hast no spiritual taste, or else thou wouldst loathe, as much as ever Egyptian loathed to drink of the waters of Nile when turned into blood, to drink of any river which flows from created springs; thou wouldst only drink of the cool stream of the

river of life which rises at the foot of the throne of God, and flows around the base of Calvary, where Jesus shed his blood. Say, soul, dost thou love Jesus only? Is he all thy salvation and all thy desire, and dost thou trust and repose wholly and solely in him? For if not, then thou hast no spiritual taste, and thou hast no reason to believe that thou belongest unto Jesus Christ at all.

5. But, again, to pass on, having sufficiently enlarged upon that point; faith as a *taste is not simply a discerning, but a delighting faculty.* Men derive much satisfaction from the organs of taste. We ought not to be as the glutton, whose only reason for living is that he may eat; but yet every one of us may be thankful that God has not made the repairing of our frame to be an obnoxious operation, and that he has given us a capacity for enjoying the flavours of food. Certain critics have a faith which is very good for discerning, but never for enjoying. They have a fine nose for heresy; the moment it comes anywhere near them they discover it; and if there be half a word in a sermon they do not like how sure they will be to take it home. One bad fish in our basket, and it will be cried all round the town before to-morrow; but let us offer never so much that is good we can scarce win a notice. Dear friends, I would have God's people discern, but the discerning propensity ought not to destroy the enjoying faculty. I bless God I love the doctrines of grace; but I never considered the doctrines of grace to be like drawn swords with which to fight every man living. I know it is a good thing to be like the armed men about the bed of Solomon, each with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night; but for my part, to recline upon that royal bed, and sleep with Jesu's bosom for a pillow, is better still. I pray you, dear friends, delight yourselves in Christ! Let your faith so taste Jesus as to make you glad. Let your joy be as the joy of harvest, and sing ye with Zechariah, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." Better is Christ to you than all earth's harvests. He is the cluster of Eshcol, so heavy that one man can never carry all of Christ! He is not one grape, but a cluster of sweetness is our beloved unto us! Feed to the full; eat, yea drink abundantly, O beloved! Be ye satiated with delight, and let your soul rejoice as with marrow and fatness; so shall ye understand in the fullest degree what this taste is which so delighteth the soul of man.

King Solomon, during his lifetime, sat at a feast. The first rich viand was one which he had asked for himself; it was wisdom. He tasted all its dainty morsels, and he cried, "In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Then an attendant, all bedecked with gold and silver, brought in the lordly dish of riches, and Solomon ate thereof till he cried out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, there is no profit under the sun." Then there came in one who looked most bewitching, bearing the dish of carnal and fleshly pleasure, and Solomon greedily sat down thereat, for this time, he thought, full sure he had obtained the honey that would enlighten his eyes. So Solomon feasted to the very full, and at the last he said, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" But he never would have said

this concerning the true wisdom; for at the last, when the old man ceased to be a hunter of pleasure, he bore his willing testimony to the perfection of that love which is better than wine. Dearly beloved, you who know what it is to taste Christ, can witness that Immanuel's love makes you like Jonathan in the wood, who did but dip the end of his spear into the honey, and his eyes were enlightened, Oh! what enlightenment, what joy, what consolation, what leaping of heart is there to that man who has learned to feed on Jesus, and on Jesus Christ alone.

6. We must remark, dear friends, that this taste of ours *is in this life imperfect.* As old master Durham says, "'Tis but a taste!" You have tasted that the Lord is gracious, but you do not know how good and how gracious he is. I am sure my soul was hot within me when you were singing that verse just now—

"But when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought."

There is another verse, too, which I may aptly quote:—

"When I have tasted of the grapes,
I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."

We have not yet rested beneath the vines of Canaan; we have only enjoyed the firstfruits of the Spirit, and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fulness of the heavenly heritage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. We are like David; we have had a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem, that is within the gate, brought to us through the valour of Christ Jesus; but we have not yet drank the clear, cool stream, in all its perfection, at the fountain head. We are but beginners in spiritual education; we have learned the first letters of the alphabet; we cannot read words yet, much less can we read sentences; we are but infants now; we have not come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. As one says, "He that has been in heaven but five minutes, knows more than all the general assembly on earth, though they were all learned divines." We shall know more of Christ by one glimpse of him in heaven, than we shall know by all our learning here. 'Tis but a taste here, and if a taste be so ravishing, what must it be to sit at the table and eat bread in the kingdom of God? And here I must again remark, that this imperfection of taste is in some Christians far more conspicuous than in others. There are some believers who seem to have no appreciating taste for Christ, they hardly know the savour of his blessed name. I declare to you all, if Christ were not better than the visible Church, we might be weary of him; his Church, alas, is but the blurred and blotted portrait of himself: lovely she is; but sometimes those blots and blurs are so conspicuous to our anxious eyes, that we rather mourn her uncomeliness than rejoice over her beauty. Oh! how many there are among you, professors of Christ, that are none of his. What says the Apostle? "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the

cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame." Dear brethren, let us purge ourselves from the corruptions of these pretenders. Frivolity, pleasure, gain, worldliness, covetousness, what have these things to do with us? Get ye hence; get ye hence; avaunt, ye fiends! But how many open their hearts, and say, "Come, hide here, ye unclean spirits; come and dwell with us!" Surely, surely, surely, you have but little taste, if any, for the manna of Christ, or you would never eat the dust which is the serpent's meat. God quicken his people; wash their mouths out, if necessary, even with bitter medicine, till they desire Christ anew, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart.

7. Though ours is an imperfect, we thank God *it is a growing taste.* Old Barzillai told David that he was too old a man to enjoy dainties. Said he, "Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink?" We know that sometimes in the decline of life, the taste, like the other powers of manhood, decays; but glory be to God, a taste for Christ will never decay. The good bishop, when he was dying, was asked by his wife whether he knew her; but he shook his head, for memory had failed. His dearest friends and children, after repeating their names, asked whether their dear friend and father had not some recollection of them; but again he shook his head. "Do you remember Jesus?" said one; and oh! how he clasped his hands together, for that was a name he never could forget!

Our venerable friends who are present with us this morning, find—I hope they do—that they have a loosened grip for the world, but a tighter grasp for Christ. While your eyes grow dim and you need your glasses, I hope you can see Christ more clearly than ever. God grant that some of you may be called up to the top of Pisgah, and may have a view of the landscape, and see your Master's love in all the length and breadth of its fulness and richness, ere yet you are raised up to heaven by the kiss of the Most High. In dying moments, the Christian's taste gets quickened; and whereas before he *thought* Christ sweet, now he *knows* he is; whereas he once compared him to honey, now he declareth that honey from the honeycomb is sour compared with Christ; and he can cry out with Rutherford, "Black heavens, black moon, black sun! But fair, fair, incomparably fair Lord Jesus!" He can now tread everything beneath his feet as he would a dead and corrupt thing; but his soul crieth, "Jesu! Jesu! Jesu! thou art brighter, fairer, and more lovely to me than ever thou wast before!" God give us grace that we may understand and know experimentally what it is to taste that the Lord is gracious.

II. MEN WHO HAVE THUS TASTED OF CHRIST HAVE SPECIAL SINS TO AVOID AND OBJECTS TO DESIRE.

We first dwell upon evils to be avoided. *Malice.* "Revenge is sweet," is the proverb of the Italians, and many an Englishman has half learned it, if not wholly. "Revenge is sweet;" but not to the man who has tasted Christ, for he says, "How can I have vengeance upon my fellow, when Christ hath put away my sin?" Now, forgiveness is sweet, and he loatheth malice, and turneth aside from it as from venom itself. *Guile:* that is craftiness whereby men rob their fellow-creatures. Some men think guile a very fine thing. "That's a sharp fellow," says one; and

sage fathers pat their boys on the back, and say, "If you become a sharp fellow you will be an alderman yet." See yon trader, you must keep all your eyes open or he will take you in; he does not exactly tell lies, but—well, he shaves very closely to the truth. It is guile; low craftiness and cunning. A man of God hates that thing. "What, I; I the servant of the God of truth, crouch, bend, fawn, do anything but what is upright, to gain wealth?" As surely as the Lord saith concerning the Laodicean Church, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," so the believer saith concerning anything that is not true and straightforward, "I am sick of it; I loathe it; I abhor it; I turn from it." The next thing is *hypocrisy*, whereby men are not so much robbed and injured as deceived. A Christian can be no hypocrite. Hypocrisy, like all other sins, lurks in man till the very last; but a believer hates to pretend to be what he is not. A man who has once tasted that the Lord is gracious, is a true and transparent man in his profession. If any suppose him to be better than he is, he does not wish to wear feathers that are not his own; he would not be glorified by another man's labours, nor build upon another man's foundation; hypocrisy he utterly detesteth, and would sooner die a pauper than live a pretender. Any man among you who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, will, I am sure, without my exhortation this morning, loathe all malice, guile and hypocrisy.

Once more, put away *all evil speaking*. I am sorry to say that there are some, who I hope are Christians, who do not hate evil speaking. "Have you heard about Mrs. So-and-So?" I shall not mention names, but there are fifty, perhaps a hundred, here, to whom it will apply. There is a little mischief in the village about Miss A or Mr. B, and Mrs. Tittle-tattle is up as early as possible, and calls on Mrs. Scandal, and says, "Have you heard the sad news? I hope it is not true." "No, I have not heard it." "Well, don't mention it to anybody else, I hope it is not correct; but I have heard so-and-so." And the two sit down, and they make such a breakfast over it; and they both say they hope it is not true, while all the time they are as glad of it in their hearts as ever they can be. They go on telling others they hope it is not true, and telling them not to mention it to anybody else, until they do all the mischief before they have stopped to enquire whether or not they are telling lies. Then there are the men; they like a bit of scandal in the newspapers every now and then. Public men have often to feel that evil speaking must be very sweet to the people, or surely it would never pay to print such barefaced lies. A Christian should have nothing to do with scandal, but should say in a company, "Stop! I cannot sit by and hear you say that of an absent person; if he were here, you might say what you liked, but as he is not, please to hold your tongue, for I am here as a defender of those who are back-bitten." Every absent man should have an advocate in a Christian. More especially should this be true when the rumour injures a brother. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest;" and he is an ill believer who tells tales about his fellow-Christians. If you, as a Church member, have aught against a brother, tell him alone; and then, if it should be some public and crying sin, tell it in an orderly manner to the Church-officers; but for you to go chattering about

things you do not know to be true, is such an offence against Church-order, that if you are expelled Church-communion for it, the ejectment will be justifiable. You certainly cannot expect to have fellowship with Christ if you mar the fellowship of Christ's Church by talking the one against the other. See, now, among our different denominations, how pleased some ministers are if they can get a bone to pick against a brother in another denomination. If there is a fresh hitch in the machinery of the Church of England, how often the Dissenter feels devoutly glad that there is likely to be an upsetting of the Episcopal communion; and I know that some Episcopalians, when they hear that in a Dissenting Church there is something wrong, say, "Well, it is a great pity;" but they think to themselves, "Well, they will eat one another up and will be all the less trouble to us." Rinse your mouths, rinse your mouths all of you who have said aught against your brethren hitherto, and from this time forth, "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," eschew all evil speaking against your fellow-men.

The apostle, having told us what to avoid, tells us what to eat and drink. "As newborn babes desire the *sincere* milk of the word;" a most unfortunate translation, for who ever heard of "sincere milk?" "Unadulterated milk" is a more sensible translation. The Christian man should desire pure doctrine; he should desire to hear the gospel plainly and truthfully preached; not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. It is a sign of declining health in a Christian when he does not love the means of grace. "But how, sir, if I cannot get on with my minister?" Well, it may be your sin that makes him such a poor minister as you think him to be. No doubt, while the pew is to be supplied by the pulpit, the pulpit is acted upon very greatly by the chilliness and hardness of the pew. If you prayed more for your minister you would feed better under him. But in London you have not this excuse, for there is such a choice of preachers of the Word here, that if you had a desire for the pure milk, you might obtain it somewhere or other. Oh! what a good thing it is to have spiritual hunger and thirst! When people are not hungry, you may set a fine meal before them, but they will turn up their noses at it; but let a man come fresh from the field, hungry, down he sits; no matter how rough the fare; he only wants it to be sweet, wholesome, and nutritious, and he cuts huge slices for himself, and feeds to the full. Give me a congregation of hungry hearers, such as I usually see here on the Sabbath-day, with eyes that seldom turn from the preacher, and with ears that catch every word! I think any man could preach to my congregation, for you come up here hungry. A minister would wish to be like the mother-bird which comes back with the worm to the nest, and finds all the mouths open, every one desiring to be fed. Now, this is just, I think, what the apostle meant—"As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word." You know babes do not have set times for desiring their food, but when they want it they *will* have it, and will cry till they get it. So should it be with believers. They should have such unceremonious longings to be fed from the breasts of heaven's consolation, that they will cry till they get the heavenly food from God their Father, that living food by which they grow and are made strong in Christ.

I have thus enlarged upon my text; and now, two or three minutes only, upon the next. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Dear Christian friends, I have spoken to you of this taste; but among us this morning, in the galleries, and down below here, there is a goodly sprinkle of men who do not know Christ. They have come up to this house of prayer, not that they might know Christ, but that they might see a vast congregation, and amuse themselves by novelty. Ah! how many come with this miserable object. Well, let them come for whatever they like, we are glad to see them, for being in the way, God may meet with them. Now, to such of you who are not believers in Christ, and have never tasted that he is gracious, we say this,—"O taste and see;" by which we mean, *experience is necessary*. Taste and see; you cannot see without tasting. If you would know whether religion is a good and happy thing, try it. It is not rubbing the bread upon the cheek; it is tasting. You must have an inward sense of the things of God. "My son, give me *thine heart*." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Let thy heart believe in Jesus. Be not content with ceremonies; rest not satisfied with outward morality. Only that which reaches the core will really affect the fruit of the tree. We must make the fountain pure, or else our filtering the stream is all in vain. "Taste and see." Dear hearers, I cannot insist too earnestly upon this. Get an inward religion; vital godliness; which goeth into the secret parts of the belly and dwelleth in the inner man. Nothing but tasting can save your souls. And then we say, "Taste *and see*," we are quite sure that if you will taste you shall *see* that the Lord is good. I bear my willing witness that Christ maketh a man blessed; that religion is a happy thing, and that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But you do not believe me. Then taste and see for yourselves. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near." May the Spirit of God lead you to give your heart to Jesus, and you will find that the true religion of Jesus is a good thing for you; a good thing for you, young woman; a good thing for you, young man; good for the trader; good for the gentleman; good for the artizan; good for every one of you. We feel very earnest that you should do this, and therefore we say, "*O* taste and see that the Lord is good!" Do not despise our invitation! We beseech you, by the mercies of God, to give your hearts to Jesus. From our very souls, as though we pleaded for our own lives, we would beseech you. Give the things of God a patient consideration. Believe in Jesus; this is to taste. Trust Christ; this is to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Ay, I know you will turn on your heel, and say that religion is a good thing for Sundays, but you do not see anything in it for every-day life. Ah! sirs, it is for want of knowing better. If you would but taste and see, you would regret that you had not tasted before, and you would rejoice and bless the Lord that you were brought to taste at the last. But you say, "*May I taste?*" Oh, yes; grace is free; Christ is free. If thou wilt come, poor sinner, there is none to push thee back. If God has made thee willing to take Christ, depend upon it Christ was always willing to take thee, for where God puts a renewed will into man, it is the image of his own eternal will. If thou

desirest Christ, trust him this morning. This is the way to escape from hell and fly to heaven. Art thou black? The fountain is open—wash. Art thou hungry? The door is not shut; it stands open all day; come then and eat. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If any of you should repent of trusting Christ come and blame me. Find my Master in your hearts, and if he be not a good and precious Saviour to you, if he do not feed your soul with gladness, keep you from sin, and bring you at last to heaven, come and tell me I am found a false witness unto Christ! From the depths of my soul I say it, I would sooner be a Christian than an emperor; sooner have Christ than a crown; and sooner bear his cross than sit upon the throne of a Cæsar. Soul, taste and see that he is good. "But I am not fit to taste," saith one. Well, but who is fit to eat? A hungry man? Art thou hungry? Eat. "Oh, but my hands are black." Never mind; it is not hand-work here, it is mouth-work. "Oh, but I am afraid I have no taste, and that if I did receive Christ into my heart, I should not taste his sweetness." Mark, the taste is *in him* and not in your mouth. Come and take him as he is. A little child, however weak, can be fed; put up thy mouth, thou weak and foolish sinner, weary and heavy laden as thou art, and by receiving Christ into thy soul's mouth, thou shalt find him good, and thou shalt go thy way rejoicing. Hearken diligently unto the Lord, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. It will be an awful thing to feed on the wind for ever, and roll the morsels of hell beneath your tongue to all eternity, but this *must* be your portion unless ye taste of Christ.

May he add his own blessing to his own glory. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE INSEPARABLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 13TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Repent ye, and believe the gospel."—Mark i. 15.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ commences his ministry by announcing its leading commands. He cometh up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber; his love notes are repentance and faith. He cometh forth fully prepared for his office, having been in the desert, "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin;" his loins are girded like a strong man to run a race. He preacheth with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation; in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning he glittereth with the dew of his youth. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messias speaketh in the greatness of his strength. He crieth unto the sons of men, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Let us give our ears to these words which, like their author, are full of grace and truth. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ's whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of his entire ministry; and coming from the lips of such an one, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed, and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I. I shall commence by remarking that *the gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, a command.* "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Our Lord does condescend to *reason.* Often his ministry graciously acted out the old text, "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." He does *persuade* men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does *invite* men, and oh, how lovingly he woos them to be wise. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does *entreat* men; he condescendeth to become, as it were, a beggar to his own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to him. Indeed, he maketh this to be the duty of his ministers, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Yet, remember, though he condescendeth to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still his gospel hath in it all the dignity and force of a command; and if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a

command from God, attended with a divine sanction, and not to be neglected save at the infinite peril of the soul. When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage-supper, there was an invitation, but it had all the obligation of a command, since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their king. When the builders reject Christ, he becomes a stone of stumbling to "the disobedient;" but how could they disobey if there were no command? The gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties, and beseechings, but it also takes the higher ground of authority. "Repent ye" is as much a command of God as "Thou shalt not steal. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" has as fully a divine authority as "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Think not, O men, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose it or not! Dream not, O sinners, that ye may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that ye may neglect it and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concerning which we cry aloud, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation!" God *commands* you to repent. The same God before whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God who proclaimed the law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings and with thunders, speaketh to us more gently, but still as divinely, through his only begotten Son, when he saith to us, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Why is this, dear friends; why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made penal to refuse to do so. For this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners: may I believe? Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ? Now this question is put aside, once for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again. You are commanded by God to do it, therefore you may do it. Every creature under heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and bow the knee at his name; every creature, wherever the Gospel comes, wherever the truth is preached, is commanded there and then to believe the gospel; and it is put in that shape, I say, lest any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it. Surely, you *may* do what God commands you to do. You may throw this in the devil's teeth—"I may do it; I am bidden to do it by him who hath authority, and I am threatened if I do not with eternal damnation from his presence, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the cross. However benighted and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." He that commanded thee to believe will justify thee in believing; he cannot condemn thee for that which he himself bids thee do. But while there is this blessed reason for the gospel's being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the day of

judgment; that no man may say at the last, "Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ; Lord, heaven's gate was shut in my face; I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man." "Nay," saith the Lord, with tones of thunder, "the times of man's ignorance I winked at, but in the gospel I commanded all men everywhere to repent; I sent my Son, and then I sent my apostles, and afterwards my ministers, and I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, 'Repent and be converted everyone of you;' and as Peter preached at Pentecost, so bade I them preach to thee. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in, and inasmuch as you did not come at my command, you have added sin to sin; you have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities; and now, inasmuch as you did reject my Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, Jehovah that made you, he who gives you the breath of your nostrils, he against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel. He gives his promise—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and he adds the solemn threatening—"He that believeth not shall be damned." I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed this iron bondage from my neck, and now I am the joyful servant of the truth which maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word; and I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commandeth men to repent, and believe the gospel. It is one of the saddest proofs of man's utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ, and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost, no man ever will be obedient to this command, but still it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it; and while publishing God's command with all simplicity, we may expect that he will divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom he has ordained unto eternal life.

II. While the gospel is a command, *it is a two-fold command explaining itself.* "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance; and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word repentance, by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text, and signifies "to change one's mind." Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren, that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle; and the change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work, and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another

word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often I admit, but still it is used, which signifies "an after-care," a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety, than that which signifies changing one's mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn—

> "Repentance is to leave
> The sins we loved before,
> And show that we in earnest grieve,
> By doing so no more."

To repent does mean a change of mind; but then it is a thorough change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination, an illumination of the Holy Spirit; and I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation.

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, *repentance*. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith; and therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, "Believe the gospel." Then, dear friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which *leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it*, is not the repentance meant here. Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not a part of their repentance; it is a sin, a very great and grievous sin, for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ's blood; it is a denial of the truthfulness of God's promise; it is a detracting from the grace and favour of God who sent the gospel. Such a persuasion you must labour to get rid of, for it came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Ghost never did teach a man that his sins were too great to be forgiven, for that would be to make God the Holy Spirit to teach a lie. If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it; it cometh from the powers of darkness, and not from the Holy Ghost; and if some of you are troubled because you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you; be you as black as hell he can save you; and it is a wicked falsehood, and a high insult against the majesty of divine love when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God.

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell *upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin itself, and so keeps him from believing.* I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of hell, and thoughts of death and of eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, "They have been shaken over the mouth of hell by their collar," and have almost felt the torments of the pit before they went thither. Dear friends, this is not repentance.

Many a man has felt all that and has yet been lost. Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, who has had all its pangs and convictions, and yet has gone down to the grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but, they are not an essential part of it. That which is called law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts that God's mercy is gone for ever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance; in fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus doth often beat the great hell-drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the gospel which proclaimeth pardon to them. I tell thee, sinner, any repentance that keeps thee from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of; any repentance that makes thee think Christ will not save thee, goes beyond the truth and against the truth, and the sooner thou art rid of it the better. God deliver thee from it, for the repentance that will save thee is quite consistent with faith in Christ.

There is, again, a *false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair*. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, "I have done much evil; there is no hope for me; I will not hear the Word any more." If they hear it it is nothing to them, their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance; but no; they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong, but yet they go on in it all the same, feeling that there is no hope, and that they may as well continue to live as they were wont to do, and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of grace. Now, that is no repentance. It is a fire which hardens, and not the Lord's fire which melts; it may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together, and not to break the heart. If, dear friends, you have never been the subject of these terrors do not desire them. Thank God if you have been brought to Jesus any how, but long not for needless horrors. Jesus saves you, not by what you feel, but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Do remember that no repentance is worth the having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint, on his sick-bed, once used this remarkable expression; "Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as heaven in faith." Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith also that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent the one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself, and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save, and has saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live; they repent as bitterly for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant, and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole master of the heart; the repentance which purges the soul from dead works, and the faith that fills the soul with living

works; the repentance which pulls down, and the faith which builds up; the repentance that scatters stones, and the faith which puts stones together; the repentance which ordains a time to weep, and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things together make up the work of grace within, whereby men's souls are saved. Be it, then, laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever.

Having shown you what this repentance is not, *let us dwell for a moment upon what it is.* The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith; it is born at the same time with faith—they are twins, and to say which is the elder-born passes my knowledge. It is a great mystery; faith is before repentance in some of its acts, and repentance before faith in another view of it; the fact being that they come into the soul together. Now, a repentance which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the right repentance. When I can say, "My sin is washed away by Jesu's blood," and then repent because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die—that dove-eyed repentance which looks at his bleeding wounds, and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ—that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the cross for it—that is the repentance which bringeth us salvation.

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin to-day because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God; but when I avoid it and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave himself for me, and because I am not my own, but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit of God.

And again, that change of mind, that after carefulness which leads me to resolve that in future I will live like Jesus, and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because he hath redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood—that is the repentance which will save me, and the repentance which he asks of me. O ye nations of the earth, he asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while ye do fear and shake because his lightnings are abroad; but he asks you to weep and wail because *of him;* to look on *him* whom you have pierced, and to mourn for him as a man mourneth for his only son; he bids you remember that you nailed the Saviour to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Saviour there, and put the Lord of glory to an ignominious and an accursed death. This is the only repentance we have to preach; not law and terrors; not despair; not driving men to self-murder—this is the terror of the world which worketh death; but godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, "*Believe the gospel.*" Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can but admire their faithfulness and bless God for them; yet there is a difficulty and a danger; it may be that in preaching

simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, they may omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin; for my text seems to me to put it thus: no repentance is true but that which consorts with faith; no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect. Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing; Jesus Christ has washed all that away;" and can talk about all the crimes of their youth, and the iniquities of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear; never feel their souls ready to burst because they should have been such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles o'er again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine. Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith;" and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh, such men are liars; they have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith which will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others; laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally with it; they make excuses for it; they commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offences slight faults and little defalcations; and in business they wink at departures from uprightness, and consider them to be mere matters of trade; the fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin, and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh! if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you; the sooner you are cleaned out of it the better for you, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock. My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ, and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance; to hate the very thought of sin; so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ, and Christ only? Be assured of this, that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last. A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies; but when you get on a death-bed, and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood

and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered mortar; that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace. Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Saviour to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

III. But we must pass on to a third remark. *These commands of Christ are of the most reasonable character.*

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should *repent?* You have a person who has offended you; you are ready to forgive him; do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask of him an apology; if you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? "No," say you, "I should think I showed my kindness in accepting rather than any harshness in demanding an apology from him." So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, seeth it to be inconsistent with the dignity of his kingship to absolve an offender who expresseth no contrition; and I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Doth God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people heavy? Rather doth he not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in his grace has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy?" Why, dear friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities, and yet to go to heaven? What, you think to have poison in your veins, and yet be healthy? What, man, keep the thief in doors, and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained, and yet be thought spotless? Harbour the disease and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd! Repentance is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary; it is but a reasonable service. O that men were reasonable, and they would repent; it is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the gospel.

And then, again, *believing;* is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty; altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature that he has made, that he should believe what he tells him. And what is it he asks you to believe? Anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, he can still be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. He asks you to trust in Christ to save you. Can you expect that he will save you if you will not trust him? Have you really the hardihood to think that he will carry you to heaven while all the while you declare he cannot do it? Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Saviour to save you while you say, "I do not believe thou art a Saviour, and I will not trust thee?" Is it consistent with his dignity for him to save you, and suffer you to remain an unbelieving sinner, doubting his grace, mistrusting his love, slandering his character, doubting the efficacy of his blood, and of his plea? Why, man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that he should

demand of thee that thou shouldst believe in Christ. And this he doth demand of thee this morning. "Repent and believe the gospel." O friends, O friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you never will repent and believe the gospel. We may lay God's command, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but, reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God his due; you will go on in your sins; you will not come unto him that you may have life; and it is here the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect to make them willing in the day of his power. But oh! in God's name I warn you that, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without his Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you; for had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes. Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! for if the truths which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day.

IV. But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make, and that is, *this is a command which demands immediate obedience.* I do not know how it is, let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think about their souls *now.* Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles and the thunder of the cannon. One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we should not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open listening to all this noise." No; and so when people come to chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith; they listen to it. "What do you think of it?" "Oh—very well." But suppose it were real; suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe. Yes, sirs, but *it is real,* and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst. God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard you would escape from your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the gospel, and you would do this *to-day.* This is the command of Christ, I say, to-day. To-day is *God's time.* "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "To-day," the gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it were an unholy gospel. If the gospel told men to repent of sin to-morrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it to-day, and that would indeed be to pander to men's lusts. But the gospel maketh a clean sweep of sin, and demandeth of man that he should throw down the weapons of *his* rebellion *now.* Down with them, man! every one of them. Down, sir, down with them, and down with them *now!* You must not keep one of them; throw them down at once! The gospel challengeth

him that he believe in Jesus now. So long as thou continuest in unbelief thou continuest in sin, and art increasing thy sin; and to give thee leave to be an unbeliever for an hour, were to pander to thy lusts; therefore it demandeth of thee faith, and faith *now*, for this is God's time, and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner. Besides, sinner, *it is thy time.* This is the only time thou canst call thine own. To-morrow! Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written save in the almanack of the fool? To-morrow! Oh, how hast thou ruined multitudes! "To-morrow," say men; but, like the hind-wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front-wheel, always near to their duty; they still go on, and on, but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, to-morrow is still a little beyond them—but a little, and so they never come to Christ at all. This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said—

> "'I will to-morrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it;'
> To-morrow comes, to-morrow goes, and still thou art 'to do it;
> Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,
> Until the day of death is one, and judgment is the other."

O sons of men, always *to be* blessed, *to be* obedient, but never obedient, when will ye learn to be wise? This is your only time; it is God's time, *and this is the best time.* You will never find it easier to repent than now; you will never find it easier to believe than now. It is impossible *now* except the Spirit of God be with you; it will be as impossible to-morrow; but if now you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the gospel which I preach; and while I cry to thee in God's name, "Repent and believe," he that bade me command you thus to do gives power with the command, that even as Christ spake to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet, so when we speak to your proud heart it yields because of the grace that accompanies the word, and you repent and believe the gospel. So may it be, and may the message of this morning gather out the elect, and make them willing in the day of God's power.

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a *continual force.* "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," is advice to the young beginner, and it is advice to the old grey-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel." St. Anselm, who *was* a saint—and that is more than many of them were who were called so—St. Anselm once cried out "Oh! sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting of my whole life!" And Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance; repentance has been with me all my life, and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ; and as we walk by faith from the wicket gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance

Why, dear friends, the Christian man, after he is saved, repents more than ever he did before, for now he repents, not merely of overt deeds, but even of imaginations. He will take himself to task at night, and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought; because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust; because the thought of evil has flitted through his mind—for all this he will vex himself before God; and were it not that he still continues to believe the gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and no rest. When temptation comes to him the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was. One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an ill woman, and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin he ran away with all his might, and she ran after him, crying, "Wherefore runnest thou away? It is I." He answered, "I run away because I am not I; I am a new man." Now, it is just that, "I am not I," which keeps the Christian out of sin; that hating of the former "I," that repenting of the old sin that maketh him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin. Dear friends, the more the Christian man knows of Christ's love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love. Every doctrine of the gospel will make a Christian man repent. Election, for instance. "How could I sin," saith he. "I that was God's favourite, chosen of him from before the foundation of the world." Final perseverance will make him repent. "How can I sin," says he, "that am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villanous as to sin against everlasting mercy?" Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fount for sacred woe; and there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds, and will cry with George Herbert—

> "Oh, who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
> Ye clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,
> My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things
> That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
> Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
> My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
> Unless they set new conduits, new supplies
> To bear them out, and with my state agree."

And all this is because he murdered Christ; because his sin nailed the Saviour to the tree; and therefore he weepeth and mourneth even to his life's end. Sinning, repenting, and believing—these are three things that will keep with us till we die. Sinning will stop at the river Jordan; repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin; and faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be so needful as it has been here, for there we shall see even as we are seen, and shall know even as we are known.

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my

Master's will to you this morning, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Here are some of you come from foreign countries, and many of you are from our provincial towns in England; you came here, perhaps, to hear the preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed. Now, this I have to say to you this morning: In that great day when a congregation ten thousand times larger than this shall be assembled, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, "I did not hear the gospel; I did not know what I must do to be saved!" You have heard it: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." That is, trust Christ; believe that he is able and willing to save you. But there is something better. In that great day, I say, there will be some of you present—oh! let us hope all of us—who will be able to say, "Thank God that ever I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance; thank God that I looked to Christ, and took him to be my Saviour from first to last; for here am I, a monument of grace, a sinner saved by blood, to praise him while time and eternity shall last!" God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this gospel; but if you repent and believe, then we shall praise that grace which turned our hearts, and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ, and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit. What shall I say more unto you? Wherefore, wherefore will you reject this? If I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams, then turn on your heel and reject my discourse. If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me? But if I have preached that which Christ preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world's Redeemer, I charge you by the cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha, obey this divine message and you shall have eternal life; but refuse it, and on your own heads be your blood for ever and ever!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AM I CLEAR OF HIS BLOOD?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 20TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."—Gen. iv. 10.

CAIN was of the wicked one and slew his brother. "The way of Cain" is not hard to describe. He is too proud to offer atonement for his sin; he prefers his own way of sacrifice; he presents a bloodless oblation; he hates the obedience of faith; he smites the faithful Abel. See ye the way of Cain, and beware, O proud self-righteous ones, lest ye run therein, for the steps are few from self-righteous pride to hatred of true believers, and murder is not far in advance. There is the seed of every infamy in the proud spirit of self-justification, and it is a great mercy that it does not oftener show itself in all its terrific ripeness. Look ye, bold boasters of your own merits, at the mangled body of the first martyr, for this is the full-blown development of your rebellious self-conceit. From all pride and vain-glory, from all self-righteousness and hatred of the cross of Christ, good Lord deliver us.

This is not, however, the drift of my discourse this morning, I have rather to indicate the method in which we also may be guilty of this sin of blood-guiltiness concerning our brother.

Dear friends, I feel assured that the text of this morning, terrible as it must have been in the ears of Cain, ought to ring in your ears and mine; and it may be that while that cry is heard again, though at the distance of many thousand years, it may awaken some here present to a sense of guilt, and to a desire for amendment; and thus the blood of Abel may speak good, though terrible things to them, and prepare their ears to listen to the voice of that other blood, "which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

First, we shall this morning *enquire for the criminals whose brothers' blood cries from the ground;* next, we will endeavour *to show the execrable character of the crime;* then, thirdly, *we will expect the judgment;* and fourthly, *we will exhort the guilty ones to turn from their ways, and to hear the voice of mercy.*

I. First, then, we are to MAKE A SEARCHING ENQUIRY FOR THE CRIMINALS.

I do not intend to say much this morning, about the act of actually slaying one's brother. The question of the rightness of war is a moot

point even among moral men. Among those who read their Bibles, the allowance of defensive war may, perhaps, still be a question; but any other sort of war must certainly be condemned by the man who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall say nothing, however, or but very little, concerning the criminality of those ambitious and unscrupulous persons who hurry nations into war without cause. Lust of dominion and a false pride are setting the United States on a blaze. I know at this time a tragic incident connected with the present war in America. Four brothers left one of our villages in Oxfordshire, two of whom, if now alive, are in one army, and two of them in the other; and, I doubt not, as desperately as any of their comrades, they are thirsting for each other's blood. What horrors cluster around the iniquity of civil war. On yonder soil it is the blood of brothers that crieth from the ground. Men are fighting the one against the other in this lamentable conflict *for no justifiable cause*. The one cause which justified the war, as we thought—the snapping of the fetters of the slave—is gone, emancipation is not proclaimed, the bondman is forgotten. What might have been a struggle for the rights of man, is now a shameful and abominable slaughter of brothers by brothers; and a cry is going up to heaven from those blood-red fields which God will hear, and will yet avenge on both sides. Oh that they would sheathe their swords and end it once for all! What mattereth it if there be two nations or one, better two in peace, than one divided with intestine strife! How much better to have even twenty nations of living men, than one nation of mangled corpses! What signifieth it to the survivors if they have all the honour and dignity of conquerors, when they are stained up to their elbows in the blood of their fellow-men? Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, "Consider your ways." Arise, ye that draw your sword against your fellows, and weep like the weeping of Ramah of old, and make your cities like Bochim, because of your iniquities; go ye back to your homes in peace, beat your swords into ploughshares, and your spears into pruning-hooks, for Jehovah will have none of them; he casteth out your armies like dung upon the field, because ye smite every man his kinsman and his fellow! That, however, is not my subject this morning. May God grant that whatever may come of this terrible struggle, His name may be glorified; at present I see nothing but a carnival of madmen—hell let loose; and much I fear that an evil demon has deceived both nations, and made them like ravening wolves, and roaring lions.

I have to deal with *you*, however, and not with those across the ocean; let us come, therefore, to the point. There are many persons whose brother's blood cries to God from the ground. *There is the seducer;* he spake with honeyed words, and talked of love, but the poison of asps was under his tongue, for lust was in his heart. He came to a fair temple as a worshipper, but he committed infamous sacrilege, and left *that* to be the haunt of demons which once was the palace of purity. Such men are received into society; they are looked upon as gentlemen, while the fallen woman, the harlot-sister, she may hide herself beneath the shadow of night. None will make excuse for her sin; but the man, the criminal—he is called a respectable and reputable man—he may fill

places of trust, and posts of honour, and there are none who point the finger of scorn at him. Sir, the voice of that poor fallen sister's blood crieth to heaven against thee, and in the day of judgment her damnation shall be on thy skirts; all the infamy into which thou hast plunged her shall lie at thy door; and among the dreadful sights of hell, two eyes shall glare at thee through the murky darkness like the eyes of serpents, burning their way into thine inmost soul. "Thou didst deceive, and decoy me to the pit," saith she, "thine arms dragged me down to hell, and here I lie to curse thee for ever and ever as the author of my eternal ruin." I know I address some such this morning; it were not possible that all men here were pure and spotless. Hear ye while yet there is time for your repentance, for the voice of her blood crieth unto God from the ground for vengeance.

Then there are men *who educate youth in sin.* Satan's captains and marshalls; strong men with corrupt hearts, who are never better pleased than when they see the buds of evil swelling and ripening into crime. We have known some such; men of an evil eye, who not only loved sin themselves, but delighted in it in others; patted the boy on his back when he uttered his first oath; rewarded him when he committed his first theft. Satan has his Sunday-school teachers; hell has its missionaries who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and make him tenfold more a child of hell than they are themselves. Most of our villages are cursed with one such wretch, and is there a street in London which is not the haunt of one such fiend, or more? Oh, do I speak to any here who have applauded and praised young persons when they have commenced walking in the paths of infamy? Wretch, hast thou sought to entangle them in thy net? Hast thou, like the spider, thrown first one film about them and then another, till thou hast them safely in thy coils to drag them down to the den of Beelzebub? Then the voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground, and at the judgment this shall be a witness which thou shalt not be able to confute, the witness of the blood of souls ruined by thy foul and evil training. Beware ye who hunt for the precious life!

Ay, and I know some base men who, *if they see young converts, will take a pride in putting stumbling-blocks in their way.* They no sooner discover that there is some little working of conscience, than they laugh, they sneer, they point the finger. How often have I seen this in the husband who seeks to prevent the wife's attendance at the house of God; in the young man who jeers at his companion because he felt something of the power of religion! Is not this too frequent in our great establishments in London; where one young man kneels to pray and many are found to laugh at him and hurl some foul term at his head; not content to perish themselves. Like dogs pursuing a hart so will the wicked haunt the godly. Oh! you who are the enlisting-sergeants for the Black Prince of Darkness, you who seem never so happy as when you set your traps for souls to inveigle them to destruction, solemly do I warn you. Oh! take the warning, lest God's avenging angel, without warning, should soon overtake you with the dividing-sword which shall smite you even to the neck, and make you feel how terrible a thing it is to have tried to ruin the servants of the living God.

Then *there is the infidel*, the man who is not content to keep his sin in his own breast, but must needs publish his infamy, he ascends the platform and blasphemes the Almighty to his face; defies the Eternal; takes Scripture to make it the subject of unhallowed jest; and makes religion a theme for comedy. Take heed, sir, there will be a tragedy by-and-bye, in which you shall be the chief sufferer! What shall I say of those men who are more diligent by far than half God's ministers are, whose names we see placarded on every wall, who will go from town to town, especially where in greatest numbers artizans are dwelling, and never seem content unless they are preaching against everything that is pure, and lovely, and of good report; uttering things which would make your cheeks blanche if you heard them, and at the very reading of which the marrow of your bones might melt—dreadful things against the Most High, such as David heard when he said, "Horror hath taken hold of me because of the wicked that keep not thy law." Oh, sirs! should I address such persons here, the voice of your brother's blood crieth to Jehovah this day. The young men you have deluded, the working men you have led astray, the sinners whose lullaby you have sung, the souls that you have poisoned with your foul draughts, the multitudes, the multitudes that you have deceived—all these shall stand up at the last, an exceeding great army, and pointing their fingers at you, shall demand your swift destruction, because you decoyed them to their doom.

And *what shall I say of the unfaithful preacher;* the slumbering watchman of souls, the man who swore at God's altar that he was called of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word of God; the man upon whose lips men's ears waited with attention while he stood like a priest at God's altar to teach Israel God's law; the man who performed his duties half-a-sleep, in a dull and careless manner until men slept too and thought religion but a dream? What shall I say of *the minister of unholy life*, whose corrupt practice out of the pulpit has made the most telling things in the pulpit to be of no avail, has blunted the edge of the sword of the Spirit, and turned the back of God's army in the day of battle? Ay, what shall I say of the man who has amused his audience with pretty things when he ought to have roused their consciences, who has been rounding periods when he ought to have denounced the judgment of God; who has been preaching a dead morality when he ought to have lifted Christ on high as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness. What shall I say, brethren, of those who have dwindled away their congregations, who have sown strife and schism in Churches of Christ once happy, peaceful, and prosperous? What shall I say of the men who, out of the pulpit, have made a jest of the most solemn things, whose life has been so devoid of holy passion and devout enthusiasm that men have thought truth to be fiction, religion a stage-play, prayer a nullity, the Spirit of God a phantom, and eternity a joke? Among all who will need eternal compassion, surely the unfaithful, unholy, unearnest minister of Christ will be the most pitiable! What did I say? Nay, rather the most contemptible, the most despicable, the most accursed! Surely, every thunderbolt shall make his brow its target, and every arrow of God shall seek his conscience as its mark.

If I must perish, let me suffer anyhow but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit by a slumbering style of ministry, by a want of passion for souls. God knoweth how ofttimes this body trembles with horror at the thought lest the blood of souls should be required at my hands; and I cannot, and I hope I never may, I cannot understand that lifeless performance of duty, that cold and careless going through of services which, alas! is too common. How shall such men answer for it at the bar of God—the smooth things, the polite and honeyed words, the daubing of men with the untempered mortar of peace, peace, when they should have dealt with them honestly as in God's name? Oh, sirs, if we never play the Boanerges, we shall hear God's thunders in our ears, and that for ever and ever, and, cursed of men, and cursed of the Most High, shall we be without end. In Tophet we shall have this wail peculiar to ourselves, "We preached what we did not feel; we testified of what we did not know; men received not our witness, for we were hypocrites and deceivers, and now we go down, richly deserving it, to the very lowest depths of perdition."

But, my hearers, think not when I thus speak of the ministry that I am about to permit you to escape. The voice of your brother's blood crieth to God from the ground, even though you be no infidel lecturer, though you have never been debauched, though you have taught no heresy, though you have spread no schism. *If your life is unholy your brother's blood is on your skirts.* "Oh," saith one, "if I sin I sin to myself." Impossible! As well might the miasma say "I am deadly to myself alone;" as well might the cholera say "my deadly breath is for myself only." Your example spreads; you, like the leper, leave uncleanliness on everything you touch. The very atmosphere which surrounds you breeds contagion. What others see you do, they learn to do. Some may rival you, and exceed you, but if you taught them their letters, and they learn to read in hell's book better than you, all that they learn afterwards will come to your door, because the elements of sin they learned from your practice. I am afraid many people never look at their transgressions in this light. Why, you cannot help being leaders and teachers. If in your own house you are a drunkard, your boys will be drunkards too! I have heard of a man who flogged his boy for swearing, swearing at him all the time he did it. We know instances of men who feel as if they would sooner bury their children than see them grow up such as they are themselves, but yet how can it be helped? Your practice must and will influence your children; nay, not your children only, but all with whom you come into connection in the mercantile world. Do not think, sir, if you are a great employer that your men can know what your life is without being affected by that knowledge. There may be some among them who have an inward principle which will not yield to temptation, but I know of hardly anything more dangerous than for a number of operatives to come constantly into contact with one whom they look up to as a master, who is also a master of the arts of sin, and a doctor of damnation to their souls. Oh! take care, if not for yourselves yet for others, or else, as sure as you live, the voice of your brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground.

To come yet closer home to this present audience. *How much of the blood of man will lie at the door of careless professors.* You that make a profession of being Christians and yet live in sin, you are the murderers of souls by thousands. And you, too, who are moral enough in your conversation, and regular in your attendance on the outward forms of religion, you who never weep over sinners, you who never pray for them, you who never speak to them, you who leave all *that* to your minister, and think you have nothing to do with it, the voice of your brother's blood crieth from the ground to heaven. There died a man in your court the other day; you spoke not to him about his soul; his blood cries to heaven against you. You live in a villa in the country; there was a neighbour of yours, you were on speaking terms with him, but you talked not to him about his soul; he is dead; he is gone; his blood crieth to God against you! You have relations, relations to whom you could speak with familiarity; you have talked to them of business; you have befriended them, perhaps, in their needs, but you have never said a word to them about escaping from hell and fleeing to heaven. When you shall hear the mournful news that they have departed this life will not their blood cry against you from the ground where they are buried? You work, young man, in an establishment where you are somewhat respected, and, without intrusiveness you might often say a good word for your Master, but you do it not; the blood of your fellows shall cry against you if they perish! Do not think the minister is the only man who is responsible for souls. God has made you all watchmen; all of you, in your spheres, are to be watchers for the souls of men; and "If the watchman warn them not," saith the Lord, "they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands."

I know you do not think of this, and I am sorrowfully conscious that I do not feel it myself so much as I ought to do. Ah! the servants of Satan shame me; they shame me, they shame me! There comes at night a message to some of you who are the servants of Satan—"The master is come, and he calleth for thee." You leave your wife and your children without a tear, you go to your master's house, and there are cups, foul cups, passing round, and you will drink, and drink, and drink, and drink still on; never denying your master; confessing him with many an oath; saying to your comrades many things which injure your poor souls; and yet you do it so bravely, oh, so bravely! You hardly know how you get home at night, but when the morning comes, and you wake, there is the redness of the eyes, the head-ache, and the sickness; but the next night when your master wants you you go again; and so you will do year after year, even though delirium tears you like a whirlwind. But here am I, a servant of God, and when my Master calls for me and bids me go and confess him, I am tempted to be still, and when he tells me to speak to yonder man I would wickedly avoid the task; and whereas you confess your master and imprecate a curse upon your head, how often do some of us confess our master as timidly as if we feared a curse, when instead thereof it is by confession that the curse is turned away! Oh, it is enough to make us Christians ashamed to think how sinners will confess their god! Hear them at night, as they reel home through the streets, they are not ashamed

of their lord and master. Hear how they swear, and defy heaven! They are ashamed of nothing for their lord; and yet we, who have heaven for our reward, and such a Christ to serve, and one so good and gracious to us—look at us—look at us! What poor lovers of our Saviour are we! What poor lovers of the souls of men! I know this is not true of all of you, for there are some of you who love men's souls. I have delighted to see in many of you that deep earnestness which makes you yearn for the conversion of others. You will sometimes take your stand at the corner of the street, and though you cannot speak as you would, yet, the tears running down your cheeks prove your earnestness. There are many women among you, too, who have spoken a good word for Christ in strange places, and have never been ashamed of him. But oh! there are some of you, the members of this Church, over whom the angels of glory might weep, for what do you for Christ? What do you give to Christ? You are content to go to heaven yourselves, but you let your neighbours perish for lack of knowledge, and neither the Mission will you help, nor anything else besides. The blood, the blood of dying London crieth from the ground against you before God. The perishing crowds of every street, and every court, and every alley send up their wail to heaven—"O, God! thy professing people have forgotten us." The daughter of Zion is become like the ostrich of the desert; the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for want of moisture! O, God, wilt thou not visit thy Church for this, and make these, thy people, that forget the souls of men, smart even to the quick!

I do not know whether I have seized hold of any of your consciences, but if I have, may God the Holy Ghost get such a grip of you that he may never let you rest till you say, "Great God, in thy name I will do something, that the next time I hear the bell toll I may be able to say, 'I did what I could for that man, and if his soul has perished, his blood does not lie at my door, for I did tell him the way of salvation, I did exhort him to flee from the wrath to come.'" I am afraid none of us are altogether guiltless here; we must all take some degree of sin to our own consciences. I fear against every one of us, to some extent, the voice of our brother's blood crieth unto heaven because of our sloth.

II. But to pass on; I was, in the second place, to HOLD UP THIS CRIME TO EXECRATION, the chief point being whose blood it is; it is the blood of *our brethren*. "The voice of *thy brother's* blood crieth unto me from the ground." All men are our brethren; let any of them perish, if we have not done our best for their conversion, their blood hath a fearful and telling cry against us when it reaches to heaven. But I shall rather dwell this morning upon certain special cases. Perhaps, young man, *it is your natural brother's blood* that cries against you. You have been converted to God say these three, four, ten, or twenty years. You have done nothing for your brother's conversion; never written him a letter begging him to think of his state; never spoken a kind and gentle word to him about Christ. No, you have been content to let him know you were a Christian, and were half afraid of that, but you have done nothing for him. Will not your brother, if he perishes, be well able to say, "My brother and I did hang at the same breast, and were rocked in the same

cradle; we played together; 'we filled one home with glee;' he professed to know the way of life, but he never told it to me; he professed to have pardon for his sins, but he never told me how I might find it too; he suffered me to go unpitied to my doom without a tear?" Will not the voice of such blood as that cry against us if we have been guilty?

It may be, however, it is *the blood of your father or mother*. Some of you young people have come to London, and God has met with you in this house of prayer; you still have ungodly parents in the country, have you quite forgotten them? What if your grey-headed sire should die! You know he never thinks of God; what if he should die before his son has talked to him! Oh, you have a strange power, you sons and daughters; if you will only pluck the old man by the sleeve, and say, "Father, by the child's love I bear you, I would fain see you saved!" And do you fling this power away? Would you see your father and mother sold to slavery, and if it were in your power to redeem them would you keep the sordid pelf? Or if you saw them sick, would you spare your feet and not run for a physician? Or if you saw them sinking in the stream, would you not leap in, at the peril of your own life, and rescue them? And will you let them perish, perish for ever, without a struggle on your part? Will you see them go down to the depths without stretching out a helping hand? I cannot think thus of you if God has touched your hearts!

But what shall I say to those who are not only careless of parents, but are *neglecting their own children?* Mother, what if the voice of your child's blood should cry to God against you! You trained that child up without the fear of God. You sent your boy and girl to school on the Sunday it is true, but that was only to get rid of them. What was your own example to them? Bad. What was the father's example? Vicious. When your boy grows up he becomes reckless. You cannot get him to come to a place of worship with you *now*. No, but if you had brought him when he was a child, it may be he would have been here now; and, inasmuch as you have tutored him for Satan, if that boy of yours goes down to the pit, his soul shall cry against you. Up to heaven shall it send its shriek—"Oh God! the mother that did bear me, and the man that did beget me, were as cruel to me as if I were not their child, for they suffered me to come here without weeping for me, without praying for me, without taking me in their arms of loving supplication, and pleading that I might be saved!"

Look at this again in the case of some of you against whom the indictment lies, that *you have done injury to your servants*. Oh! I know great cotton-factors, builders, and traders, that have many men in their employment, and have much to answer for. Sirs, though it is your skill and your capital that brings in your wealth, have you no responsibility towards the men who day and night toil for you? You pay them their wages, but think you your responsibility has ceased with that? Are they not the very bones and sinews of your establishment, and after taking everything into consideration, do you not owe far more to them than ever the best remuneration can pay? And what if you have left their spiritual state uncared for; have said, "Oh, it is no business of mine what they do with their Sundays; I do not care what they do when they are out

of the mill, or away from the workshop?" What, sirs, do you think that as those hundreds of souls go before God they will lay no impeachment against you? Do you think they will not arraign you at God's bar? I tell you, and I think I speak in the Spirit of God when I say this, you shall find that the voices of your neglected workers, the voices of those whom you never sought to bless with spiritual instruction, shall cry against you from the ground. Would that I had an audience, for the moment, consisting more largely of such persons! There are some here who can, I think, plead exemption, for they have done much to spread spiritual light amongst those who toil for them; but I do fear me they are rather the exception than the rule, and that there are many who think no more of the men that work for them than of their horses, and some not so much; and who take as much interest in the spirit of the beast that goeth downwards as in the soul of man that goeth upwards. Let it be so no more. Employers, contractors, you that have great influence, I do entreat you—shall I fall upon my knees to do it? I could not then do it more earnestly—see to it that your brother's blood lie not on your skirts throughout eternity!

Oh! there is one sinner who can look upon this in a solemn light! Who is it that has gone down to the pit? You man yonder—who is it that died but a few days ago? The woman that loved you as she loved her own soul; who idolized you; who thought you an angel. Shall I say it before God and to your face?—you ruined her. And what next, sir? You cast her off as though she were but dirt, and threw her into the kennel with a broken heart. And being there, her god having cast her off—for you were her god—she fell into despair, and despair led to dreadful consequences, and to direr ruin still. She has gone, and you are glad of it; *glad of it*, for you will hear no more of her now, you say. Sir, you *shall* hear of it; you *shall* hear of it; you *shall* hear of it! As long as you live her spirit shall haunt you; track you to the filthy joy which you have planned for a future day; and on your death bed she shall be there to twist her fingers in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body, and drag it down to the hell appointed for such fiends as you; for you spilt her blood, the blood of her that trusted you—a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel's sister, and you pulled her down, and made her a devil's tool! God save you! for if he does not, your damnation shall be seven-fold. Oh! thou son of Belial, what shall be thy doom when God dealeth with thee as thou deservest? Are these hot words? Not half so hot as I would make them. I would send them hissing into your souls if I were able; not so much to condemn you as with the hope that though you cannot make good the mischief you have done, you may yet turn from the error of your ways to seek a Saviour's blood, and find pardon for this great iniquity. Oh! dear friends, let us all take something of our text home. When we think of friends who are dead and gone, are there none over whose corpses we must say "I did not do what I could for this man; I did not do what I could for this woman?" I know when I go down to the village where I used to preach, and as I look upon the houses, I am apt to question myself—Was I as earnest with the people as I used to be? I can say I hope I never flinched from telling them all the

truth, though sometimes it had to be very rudely and roughly spoken; but yet God knoweth I do sometimes smite myself to think I did not weep over them more, and did not entreat them more to be won to Christ. And you, too, that sit in these pews so often, many of you are joyful converts to Christ, but numbers of you are still unsaved. What if any of you should be able to say at the last, "We trusted our minister; we hung upon his lips; we were never absent; we loved the Sabbath-day, but oh, he did not tell us of our sin; he did not plead with us to be saved; he left us to ourselves; he was cold when his heart should have been hot; he was a man without tears, and had a heart without sympathy for us!" Oh! sirs, God grant ye may never be able to say that of me. God save you, for my soul longeth for you. He is my witness how earnestly I long for you all in the bowels of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Come unto him! Come unto him! Let not your blood cry out against me! Oh, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust him; trust him now, that you may be saved, and that at last I may be able to say, "Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me; thou hast kept them through thy power, and they are preserved even to the end; unto thee be glory for ever and ever!"

III. We are in the third place, and that only for a moment, TO EXPECT THE JUDGMENT. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." It does not cry to a deaf ear, but to the ear of One who hears and feels the cry, and will certainly make bare his arm to smite the offender and to avenge the wrong. Seducer, infidel, tempter of the young, God hears the cry that goes up against thee, and this is its burden: it comes from souls damned through thine influence, and they say—"Lord give him his portion with the tormentors; let him suffer, for *we* suffer; he slew *us*, avenge our death!" He will do it, and the day shall come when swift destruction shall overtake thee, and as with a rod of iron will he break thee; as a potter's vessel so will he dash thee in pieces, and who shall deliver thee out of his hand?

The cry goeth up to heaven against barren, careless, cold-hearted professors, from many in London, untaught and untrained, who are on their beds to-day in the jaws of death, they cry out I say against you, careless Christians, and they say "Lord, take away their privileges from them; Lord, take them away from the Church which they disfigure and dishonour; Lord, take away these trees that bear no leaves for the healing of the nations; sweep away this salt which hath lost its savour; Lord, cast these candles that give no light into the fire; O Lord, take away, take away once for all these cities that are not set on hills, but are hidden from the sight of men." What would you say if God should visit this Church for instance, and take out of it all of you who are useless? How would the catalogue be thinned! How would our lists show here and there the black mark of erasion! Unless you are doing something to win souls, the voice of your brother's blood crieth to God from the ground, and it cries that your privileges may be taken away, and the candlestick moved out of its place. And it will be so, my hearers, it will be so except we all of us arise to serve our Master. We are happy when God does prosper us, but if we get many in our midst who do nothing for Christ we shall have "Ichabod" written on these walls; the walls that now ring with

the song of the multitude shall hear only the wail of a desolate few; the pulpit that now thunders out God's own voice will become a dead, dreary, and voiceless platform; the time will come when your deacons and your elders shall be no more men of earnest hearts, and when you shall grope as the blind in the midnight, and say—"Oh, that God would give us back once more such times as we used to have, which we frittered away through our carelessness, and lost through our lukewarmness."

Further, *how awful must be the cry of this blood from the ground against a minister!* I think I hear it, a cry from earth, from heaven, from hell: "Hurl him from his pulpit. Tear away his vestments! Snatch the book from his blood-stained hand! Smite upon the mouth the dog that will not bark; let his corpse fall before men's eyes; let him be made a hissing and a by-word, because, being made a winner of souls, he dared to trifle, and being made a watchman of a besieged city, he dared to lie down and slumber." "Tear him down; tear him down; tear him down," a hundred voices cry; "Though he be a bishop or a great man in the Church; though his eloquence be unrivalled; though his power be matchless, pluck him down from his high places; miscreant that he is to waste men's time and ruin men's souls for ever!"

And what shall the cry be against *you who still continue by your ill-example to lead others into sin—open sinners and infidels?* It would be an awful thing to pray for a man's damnation; but there are some people I know of who while they live do so much mischief, that if they were dead, men would breathe more freely. I know a village where there lives a man who contaminates half the population. There is a leer upon his face at which virtue blushes; there is a sneer at which even courage quails. He is a wretch so well taught and so deeply instructed in the highest science of iniquity, that wherever he may go he finds none a match for him, either in his reasoning or in the infamous conclusions which he draws; a man who is a deadly Upas-tree, dropping black poison upon all beneath his shadow. I did think once I would half pray that the man might die and go to his doom, but one must not; and yet, were he gone, the saints might say, "'Tis well," and as over Babylon when she is destroyed and the smoke of her torment goeth up for ever, the saints will say "Hallelujah," so have I thought that over these against whom the blood of many young people cries to God from the ground, when they go at last to their doom, men might almost say, "Hallelujah, for God hath judged the great sinner who did make the people of the earth drunk with the wine of his fornication."

IV. I hope that these terrible things have prepared our minds to hear the better THE VOICE OF EXHORTATION.

If there be the voice of blood crying against us to-day, and we affirm that none of us can altogether escape from it, what shall we do to be rid of the past? Can tears of repentance do it? No. Can promises of amendment make a blank page where there are so many blots and blurs? Ah, no! Nothing that we can do can put away our sin. But may not the future atone? May not future zeal wipe out past carelessness? May not the endeavour of our life that is yet to come, make amends for the indolence or vice of the life that is past? No. The blood of our brethren has been shed, and we cannot gather it up. The mischief

we have done is not to be retrieved! O God! souls that are lost through us cannot be saved now; the gates of hell are so shut that they can never be opened. No restitution can we make. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever; the sin is not to be washed away by repentance, nor retrieved by reformation. What then? Hopeless despair for you and I, and every one of us, were it not that there is another blood, the blood of one called Jesus, that crieth from the ground too, and the voice of that blood is "Father, forgive them; Father, forgive them." I hear a voice that says, "Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance," like the voice of Jonah in Nineveh, enough to make every man clothe himself in sackcloth. But a sweeter and a louder cry comes up—"Mercy, mercy, mercy;" and the Father bows his head and says, "Whose blood is that?" and the voice replies, "It is the blood of thine only-begotten, shed on Calvary for sin." The Father lays his thunders by, sheathes his sword, stretches out his hand, and crieth to you, the sons of men, "Come unto me, and I will have mercy upon you; turn ye, turn ye; I will pour out my Spirit upon you and ye shall live." "Repent and believe the gospel." Hate the sin that is past, and trust in Jesus for the future. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Flee, sinner, flee! The avenger of the blood that thou hast shed pursues thee with hot haste; with feet that are winged, with a heart that is athirst for blood, he pursues thee. Run, man, run! The refuge city is before thee. It is there, along the narrow way of faith. Fly, man, fly, for unless thou reach that city ere he overtake thee he shall smite thee, and one blow shall be thine everlasting ruin. For God's sake do not loiter, man! Those flowers on the left-hand side—care not for them; thou wilt dye that field with thy blood if thou lingerest there? That ale-house on the right hand? Stay for none of these things. He comes! Hark to his footsteps on the hard highway! He comes, he comes, he comes now! Oh, that now thou mayest pass the portals of the refuge-city! Trust the Son of God, and sin is forgiven, and you have entered into everlasting life.

Good Lord, add thy blessing! We are powerless; we can say no more. For Christ's sake, "by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial," bless these souls. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ah Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."—Jeremiah xxxii, 17.

AT the very time when the Chaldeans had cast up mounds round about the city of Jerusalem, and when the sword and famine of pestilence had desolated the whole land, Jeremiah, while in prison, was commanded by his God to purchase a field of Hanameel, his uncle's son at Anathoth, to subscribe the evidence of purchase by the usual witnesses, to seal the deed of transfer according to law and custom, and to do this publicly in the presence of all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. Now, this was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it; it was purchasing an estate which was utterly valueless. Reason would repudiate the notion; it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bidden him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all his children who act in faith. He bought the piece of land, and it was secured to him; he did as he was commanded, and returned to his dungeon. When he came into his chamber alone, it is possible that he began to question himself as to what he had been doing, and troubled thoughts rolled over his mind. "I have been purchasing a useless possession," said he. See how he refuses to indulge the thought. He gets as far as saying, "Ah, Lord God!" as if he were about to utter some unbelieving or rebellious sentence, but he stops himself, "Thou canst make this plot of ground of use to me; thou canst rid this land of these oppressors; thou canst make me yet sit under my vine and my fig-tree in the heritage which I have bought; for thou didst make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Beloved, this gave a majesty of the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command, things which were unaccountable to sense, and which reason would condemn. They consulted not with flesh and blood; but whether it is a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days using no weapons but the blasts of rams'-horns,—they all act upon God's command; they act contrary to all

the dictates of carnal reason; and God, even the Lord God, gives them a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith. I would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. But no; I see the Christian Church degenerating more and more into a society acting upon the same principles as commercial companies. The Church, I fear, cannot now say, "We walk by faith and not by sight." When Edward Irving preached that memorable sermon concerning the missionary, who he thought was bound to go forth without purse or scrip, and trusting in his God alone, to preach the Word, a howl went up to heaven against the man as a fanatic. They said he was visionary, impractical, mad, and all because he dared to preach a sermon full of faith in God. I do avow myself fully in sympathy with the views which he then enunciated; and I think, if the power of God were once more to baptize the Church, we should have men who would dare to trust in God instead of putting confidence in men; who would act once more as if God's bare arm were quite enough to lean on, as if faith were not fanaticism, as if confidence in an unseen Being were not an unjustifiable enthusiasm. I would to God the Church had once again a rich anointing of the supernatural, and I believe she would have if she would again act by faith; and if you and I, brethren, would venture more upon the naked promise of God we should enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. If we would but walk the waters of trouble by a living faith, we should find them solid as marble beneath our feet. If once again we could, like the world, be hanged upon nothing but the simple power and providence of God, I am sure we should find it a blessed and a safe way of living, glorious to God, and honourable to ourselves. I would that once again the Master would raise up a race of heroes who would be ridiculed by the world's scoff, and despised by mere professors; men who would act by faith in the God that liveth and abideth for ever, and venture on bold deeds where the weakness of the human arm would be manifest, and the might of Deity revealed. Then should we see the millennial age dawning upon us, and God, even our own God, would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear him.

Dear friends, it is my business this morning, to conduct you to Jeremiah's place of confidence. Seeing that his case is hopeless, knowing that man can do nothing at all for him the prophet resorts at once to the God that created the heaven and the earth, and he exclaims, "Nothing is too hard for thee." I shall use my text in addressing three characters: *to stimulate the evangelist; to encourage the enquirer;* and *to comfort the believer.*

I. To STIMULATE THE EVANGELIST.

And who is the evangelist? Every man and woman who has tasted that the Lord is gracious should be an evangelist. We should, without exception, if we have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, tell to all around us what they must do to be saved. There should be no dumb tongue in all our host; we should have no idle hand in the harvest field, but every one in his measure, whether man or woman, should be doing something to extend the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And

here, dear brother in Christ, my friend and fellow-labourer, here is your encouragement, the work is God's, and your success is in the hand of him who made the heaven and the earth. Let me refresh your memory with the old story of creation, and I think you will perceive flashes of light upon your work which will greatly encourage you in it.

1. Remember, in the first place, that *the world was created from nothing.* You have often said, "Mine is a very hard task, for I dress myself to men in whom I see nothing hopeful. I batter against a granite conscience, but it is not moved; I thunder forth the law, but the dead and callous heart has not been stirred; I talk of the love of Christ, but the eye is not suffused with tears; I point to hell, but no terror follows; and to heaven, but no holy desire is kindled! there is nothing in man that encourages me in my work, and I am ready to give it over." Brother, come thou back with me to the world's creation. Of what did God make the world? Was there any substance ready to his hand out of which to mould this round globe? What saith the Scripture? Did he not make it of nothing? Thou hast never yet grasped the idea of nothing. The idea cannot see it; it might peer into space, but space itself is something. We look up, and yonder is the blue ether, though we know not what it is; but the eye could not look on nothing; it would be blinded. Nothing is a thing which the senses cannot grasp, and yet it is out of this awful nothing that God made the sun, and moon, and stars, and all things that be. Had he spoken before creation, there would have been no voice to answer him; had he cried, there would have been no echo to repeat his voice. Nought was there anywhere, and yet he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast! The case of the sinner is a parallel one. You say there is nothing in the sinner. Ay, then, there is room here for a recreating work. Inasmuch as that heart is now empty and void, there is space for the Eternal God to come, and with his outstretched arm to create a new heart and a right spirit, and put his grace where there was none before. If *you* had to convert the sinner, then, indeed, your task were as hopeless as to create new orbs out of nothing; but, inasmuch as it is not you but your God who worketh all things, you may console yourselves with this thought, that he who hath created all this marvellous earth, and had nothing to begin with, can give life, and fear, and hope, and faith, and love, where there were no heavenly ingredients upon which he might work. Take that, then, for your joy.

2. But you tell me you have none to help you or go forth in your work with you, and that you have no patronage. "Ah, sir;" saith one, "if I had a society at my back; if I had at least a few warm-hearted friends that were banded with me, that would give me some encouragement; but I have to go forth alone, and of the people there is none with me. I stand up to preach in a village where all are cold and callous; where even my minister tells me I am a rash, bold young man, and had better hold my tongue. I look to the world, and it hates me; I turn to the Church, and it despises me. I am too enthusiastic for the Church; I am too fanatical for the world. What can I do? I am a man alone, and I have no helper!" Brother, when God made the world—and the same God is with thee—*he worked alone,* with whom took he counsel,

and who instructed him? When he balanced the clouds, and laid the foundations for the earth, who taught him the laws of gravity? Who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Was he not alone? No parliament of angels bowed at his right hand, for he created even them. No archangel bowed his head and offered advice to the Most High, for the archangel himself is but a creature. Cherubim and seraphim might sing when the work was over, but help in the work they could not. Look ye now, what star did the angels make? What spot of earth is the creation of an archangel? Look ye to the heavens above or to the deeps beneath, where see ye the impress of any hand but God's, and that hand a solitary one? The lonely worker out of emptiness creates fulness; out of non-existence calleth all things, and out of himself getteth both the matter and the manner, the way, and the how. His courts need no revenue from abroad to sustain them, for from himself alone he draws the force which is needed. Roll thee, then, thy burden on thy God if thou be alone, for alone with him thou hast the best of company. If thou hadst the hosts of heaven with thee, what wert thou without thy God? If all the Church were at thy back, terrible as an army with banners, thy defeat were certain if the Holy Ghost did not dwell in thee. I tell thee, man, if all the saints and angels in earth and heaven should unite to speed thee in thine object, yet, if thy God should stand aloof from thee, thou wouldest labour in vain and spend thy strength for nought. But with him thou shalt prevail though all men forsake thee.

"When he makes bare his arm,
What shall his work withstand?
When he his people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay his hand?"

Let not this, then, trouble thee; that thou art alone. "Ah Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."

3. But you will reply to me, "My sorrow lieth not so much in that I am alone, as in the melancholy fact that I am very conscious of my own weakness, and of my want of adaptation for my peculiar work. I come back from my Sunday's toil, saying, 'Who hath believed my report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' It seems to me as though I ploughed a rock, a rock so hard that it blunted the ploughshare. I can make no impression upon it. I have beaten the air; I seemed to have lashed the waters; I fear me that I have not the gifts which are necessary, nor have I the grace that I should have. Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! I am not sufficient for these things; but rather I feel like Jonah, that I would flee into Tarshish, that I might escape from the burden of the Lord against this Nineveh." Ay; but, brother, come, cast thy thought back again upon creation. *The Eternal needed no instruments in creation.* What tools did God use when he made the heavens and the earth? When the blacksmith bringeth forth his work, he fashioneth it with hammer and anvil: upon what anvil did God beat the red-hot matter of this earth when he formed it, and made it what it is? I know that the engraver

needeth a sharp tool, upon which he beareth with all his might when he chaseth out the lines of beauty; but when God drew this fair picture—this wondrous landscape of the heavens and the earth—what graving-tool had he? Where learn ye that he had any instrument in his mighty hand? The carpenter hath his plane, and his hammer, and his adze: what plane, what hammer, and what adze did the Eternal use? Had he ought beside his own hand? Are not the heavens the works of his fingers, and the sun and the moon his handiwork? See, then, if God can work without instruments in the creation of a world, he can surely work with a poor and a mean instrument in the conversion of a sinner. When I think of myself, it seemeth to me as if the Almighty worker did take a straw into his hand with which to penetrate a granite rock; yet, I know, though it be a straw, yet if it be in *his* hand, it would be able to pierce the globe, and thread the sphere as on a string. I know that if the Lord taketh in his hand but a smooth stone out of the current, yet when he hurleth it from his sling, it shall pierce even a giant's brow. He saveth not by man's strength, nor by human learning, and eloquence, and talent. It is *his strength*, and not the strength or weakness of the instruments to which we must look. I pray thee, turn thine eye away from thyself. What art thou? A son of man, in whom is no strength! A man that is born of woman; unclean in thine origin, and unhallowed in thine actions. There is nothing in thee why God should make thee a winner of souls; but, inasmuch as thou art nothing, thou art all the better fitted to be used by him. He shall have all the more glory because of thy weakness. I pray thee, therefore, say, with Paul, "I glory in infirmities, that the power of God may rest on me;" and let this be thy song—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." "Ah Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm; and there is nothing too hard for thee;" thou canst do wonders even by the meanest instrument.

4. Do I hear thee still complain, and say—"Alas! alas! it is little I can say! When I speak, I can but give out the text, and utter a few plain words upon it—true and earnest, but not mighty. I cannot sound out the rolling periods of a Robert Hall, nor wing my flight to the majestic heights of a Chalmers. I have no power to plead with souls with the tears and the seraphic zeal of a Whitfield. I can only tell the tale of mercy simply, and leave it there." Well, and *did not God create all things by his naked word?* Was there any eloquence when God spake, and it was done? "Let there be light," and there was light. Can ye perceive any trappings of oratory here? At this day, is not the gospel in itself the rod of Jehovah's strength? Is it not the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? And doth not our beloved apostle constantly insist upon it, that it is not with wisdom of words, nor with fineness of speech, lest the excellency of the power should not be of God, but of man; and lest man's faith should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of the Most High? Go thou on, my brother evangelist, go thou on, and speak God's Word still, for it *is* the Word which is mighty through God to the pulling down

of strong-holds. 'Twas his naked word, unadorned, simple and plain, which at the beginning made the heaven and the earth. What can be more sublimely simple than "Let there be light?" Go thou, and say in the same simplicity, "Sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and thy message shall be the voice of God from heaven which shall not return unto him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto he hath sent it.

5. "Alas!" I hear a brother crying from some corner of the building, "You are not aware of the darkness of the district in which I labour. I toil among a benighted, unintelligent, ignorant people. I cannot expect to see fruit there, toil as I may." Ah! brother, and while you talk so you never will see any fruit, for God giveth not great things to unbelieving men. But for the encouragement of thy faith, let me remind thee that it is the God that made the heavens and the earth on whom thou hast to lean, and what was that which is written of old? "The earth was without form and void, *and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" How dense that darkness was I cannot tell; that primeval darkness which had never been stirred by a single ray of light; that dense, thick seven-fold Egyptian darkness that had never known a sun or moon, and had never been pierced by light of star; and yet, primeval though it was—I was about to call it eternal darkness, but nothing can be eternal but the Most High—yet there was but a word—"Light be." And dost thou think the darkness of thy hearers is thicker than this ancient darkness of the everlasting night? Even were it so, still God is Almighty; he hath but to speak through thee, hath but to make *thy* word *his* word, and the films of blindness should fall from the eye, and he that was wrapped in midnight shall be brought out into marvellous day. I would like to know where the darkest place on the earth is, for there it is, that the missionaries should first be sent. O that we had faith to do and dare for God, and undertake the hardest tasks first! But alas! we are such cowards; we love fair fields of labour; we want promising prospects. We will plant a chapel where there is a likelihood that the people will appreciate it; we send a missionary where we think there is a probability that they will receive his Word. But shall we send the man where, in our judgment, they will not receive him, and to bid him go where they will cast out his name as evil? This is to act by faith, and this is what the heroism of the gospel demands. Gird up your loins, ye followers of Christ, seek for difficulties and overcome them. If ye are not greater than other men, how are ye the followers of the divine Jesus? If ye cannot do where others despair, how dwelleth the Holy Ghost in you? If ye will not risk where others flee, where is the glorious majesty of your faith.

6. Further, and still to press the same blessed argument. "Ay," saith one, "but the men among whom I labour are so confused in their notions; they put darkness for light and light for darkness; their moral sense is blunted; if I try to teach them, their ears are dull of hearing and their hearts are given to slumber. Besides, they are full of vain janglings and oppose themselves to the truth; I endure much contradiction of sinners, and they will not receive the truth in the love of it." Ay, then, I bid thee go back to the old creation that thou mayest be comforted concerning the new. *Did not the Holy Spirit brood with shadowing wings*

over the earth when it was chaos? Did he not bring out order from confusion? Dost thou not remember how, on a certain day, the Lord divided the waters that were above the firmament from those that were under the firmament? Dost thou not know how he rolled together the waters into their place, and called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he seas? What greater confusion could there be? That incandescent mass which had once, perhaps, been gas, and afterwards condensed itself into a globe of liquid fire, was cooled with the blessed breath of God. And when its crust grew hard, and the tumultuous waters threw their waves over the heads of Alpine heights; when the winds came roaring forth, and with carnival of hurricanes, of mingled sky and earth together; when cloud, and hill, and sea, and air, were all one seething mass, the blue sky appeared, and clouds rolled upwards to their place, and seas came downwards to their bed. He spake, and lo, the obedient waters which had flung white crests like the manes of wild horses tossing in the wind, hastened to their appointed stable in the deep; and there they remain, kept in check by no more mighty a bridle than a belt of sands. Then the earth stood out all fair and glittering, for God had done it; disorder had yielded to law; darkness gave place to light; chaos turned to glorious order in his sight. Well, now, the same marvels can be wrought in your case; only take care that you act *for God and in God's strength*, or else as well might a man bid a stormy sea be still, as you command the confused notions of men to find rest and peace in Christ. He that made the heavens and the earth, even the everlasting God, can move your difficulty away; only trust in *him*, and he shall bring it to pass.

7. "Ah," say you, "they are all so dead, so dead!" Ay, sir, and dost thou not remember *how the waters brought forward* life abundantly—fish, and fowl that should fly in the midst of heaven; and how the earth—yes, this dull, dusky earth, brought forth the creeping thing, and the cattle after its kind; and how at last, man was made out of the very dust of the earth? O sir, God can readily give life to the dead nature of evil men; thou hast but to rely on him, the quickening influence shall descend, and thou shalt live.

8. *See how fair and glorious this earth is now!* Well might the morning stars shout together, and the sons of God shout for joy! And dost thou think that God cannot make as fair a heart in man, and make it bud and blossom, and teem with hallowed life? Thinkest thou that Christ cannot make the angels sing even a nobler song of joy over a soul that is washed in blood, and a spirit robed in white that shall praise God and the Lamb for ever? And all this he can do through thee and me, my brother! O, let us labour, then, let us work and toil; let us think difficulties delights, and troubles trifles; let us lean upon him that made the heavens and the earth, for there is nothing too hard for him. Unbelief will make thee unhappy; it will cause thy service to be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High. Unbelief will prevent God from blessing thee. "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." "If thou wilt believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And if thou wilt act as one who seeth him that is in invisible, thou shalt see greater things than these, and God shall make thy path to be as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

II. In this large assembly, there are no doubt, many to be found who are really desirous to be saved, but are full of doubts, and difficulties, and questionings; I speak, then, TO THE ANXIOUS.

May I cut a knot in a moment by making one observation. Remember, my troubled friend, that the question about your salvation is not whether you can save yourself, for that is answered in a thundering negative from God's throne—*You cannot!* "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The question is—*Can God save you?* and if you will please to put it on that ground, I think your answer need not be a very difficult one.

Can God save you? That is the question. Now I know your unbelief will suggest first the difficulty that *your mind is so dark.* "I cannot see Christ," says one; "I am in such trouble of mind, I cannot understand as I would; I feel benighted; I am like the inhabitants of Zebulon and Napthali, a people that sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death; I cannot see; it is all darkness, thick as night with me." Yes, but then there is the question—Can God roll this night away? And the answer comes, he who said, "Let there be light," and there was light, can certainly repeat the miracle.

Another of your doubts will arise from the fact that *you feel so weak.*

"I would, but cannot sing,
I would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.

I would, but can't repent,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent
Till Jesus make it soft.

I would, but cannot love,
Though woo'd by love divine:
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.

I would, but cannot rest
In God's most holy will;
I know what he appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.

O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve,
My help must come from thee!"

I cannot do what I would. I would leave sin, but still I fall into it. I would lay hold on Christ, but I cannot. Then comes the question—Can God do it? And we answer, he who made the heavens and the earth without a helper, can certainly save thee when thou canst not help thyself.

Let me remind thee that no part of the world helped its own creation. It is absolutely certain that no mountain uplifted its own head; it is quite clear that no star appointed its own path of brightness. No flower can lift its head, and say, "I created my own loveliness;" no eagle that cuts the air can say, "I gave myself my soaring wing and my piercing

eye." God hath made them all; and so, sinner, thou who art troubled because of thine impotency, he wanteth no power in thee. He giveth power to the weak, and to them that hath no might he increaseth strength. Rest thou upon God in Christ, and cast thyself on him, and he will do it all.

"Ay," sayest thou again, "but I am in such an awful state of mind; *there is such a confusion within me;* hell is opened from beneath, and the sluices of my soul's sorrows are drawn up; grief streams forth in rivers from my eyes; I cannot tell what is the matter with me. My heart is like a battle-ground torn up with the prancings of horses' hoofs; I know not what I am; I cannot understand myself." Pause, I pray thee, and answer me.

Was not the world just so of old, and did not all the beauty of all lands rise out of this dire confusion? Cannot God, then, do this for thee, and give thee a peace that passeth all understanding? I beseech thee, my dear distressed friend, trust thou in Christ, despite it all, for he can hush the hurricane to slumber, and lay the storm to sleep.

Let me remind thee, O enquirer, that there is more hope in thy case than there was in the creation of the world, for in the creation there was nothing done beforehand. The plan was drawn, no doubt, but no material was provided; no stores laid in to effect the purpose. We read not that God had piled up a mass of nebulæ that he wrought out into worlds. No, he begun the work and finished it without any previous preparations; but in thy case the work is done already, *beforehand.* On the bloody tree Christ hath carried sin; in the grave he has vanquished death; in resurrection he has rent for ever the bonds of the grave; in ascension he has opened heaven to all believers; and in his intercession he is pleading still for them that trust him. It is finished, remember, so that it is easier to save thee than to make a world, for the world had nought prepared for it; there was nothing ready, but here everything is ready, and all thou art bidden to do is to come and sit at a feast that is already spread, to wear a garment that is already woven, to wash in a bath that is already filled with blood. Sinner, what sayest thou? Wilt thou believe in God's anointed or no?

Yet again, remember, that God has done something more in thee than there was done before he made the world. Emptiness did not cry "Oh! God, create me." Darkness could not pray "Oh! Lord, give me light." Confusion could not cry "Oh! God, ordain me into order." But see what he has done for you! He has taught you to cry "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He has made you plead, "Lighten my darkness, O Lord, lest I sleep the sleep of death." He has taught you to say "I have gone astray, like a lost sheep, seek thy servant." See, friend, the grass cannot pray for dew, and yet it falls, and shall you cry for it and God withhold it? The thirsty earth hath no voice to ask for showers, and yet they descend, and will God let you cry and not answer you? See ye the forests in winter; they cannot ask for leaves, and yet the verdure cometh in its season; nor can the corn entreat for sunshine, and yet God gives good things to all in due season; and you, made in his own image, will he let you cry and not hear you? when he has himself said, "As I live, saith the Lord God,

I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he should turn unto me and live."

Yet once again, and here is a rich thought of comfort. It was in God's power to make the world or not, just as he pleased. No promise bound him; no covenant made it imperative upon him that his arm should be outstretched. Sinner, the Lord is not bound to save thee except from his own promise, and that promise is "He that calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He cannot, he cannot withhold saving thee if thou callest upon him. His covenant hath bound him to be merciful to those who confess their sins. He is merciful and just to forgive us our sins, and to save us from all unrighteousness. This, then, is a case that glistens with brighter light than did the case of the uncreated world; and as, of his own will, without pledge or covenant, he made the earth what it is, most surely now he has promised it, he will save thee if thou trustest in Jesus.

Once more here. It is certain that there is more room in your case for God to glorify himself, than there was in the making of the world. In making the world he glorified his wisdom, and he magnified his power, but he could not show his mercy. He could have no mercy upon floods and mountains, upon cattle and flying fowl. There was kindness, but no mercy, for they had not sinned. Now, here is your case, there is room for every attribute of God, for his loving-kindness, his faithfulness, his truth, his power, his grace. Yours is a hopeless case, because it is hopeless to you; there is room for God, because, certainly, there is no space for you. You can do nothing; it is your extremity, and it is therefore God's opportunity. What would I give this morning if I could turn one tearful eye away from itself to Christ! I know how foolish we all are that we will be looking to flesh and blood. Turn thine eye, sinner, to the cross where bleeds the Saviour. Rest on him; he, without whom was not anything made that was made, dies for thee. He who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, works out thy redemption. Trust *him*, and the work is done. Rest on him, and thy soul is brought to-day into the realm of safety, and thou hast passed from death unto life.

I will tell you a little anecdote which will show how foolish we are, when we depend on self. I have heard that lately, a ship on her way to Australia, met with a very terrible storm, and sprung a leak; and a little while after another hurricane overtook her. There happened to be a gentleman on board, of the most nervous temperament that can be imagined, whose garrulous tongue and important air were calculated to alarm all the passengers. When the storm came on, the captain, who knew what damage had been done, managed to get near him; and the gentleman said to the captain, "What an awful storm; I am afraid we shall go to the bottom, for I hear the leak is very bad." "Well," said the captain, "as you seem to know it and perhaps the others do not, you had better not tell them, lest you should dispirit my men. Perhaps, as it is a very bad case, you would lend us your valuable self, and we may possibly get through it. Would you have the goodness to stand here and hold hard on this rope; pray do not leave it, but pull as hard as ever you can till I tell you to let it go." So our friend clenched his teeth, and put

his feet stiff down, and kept on holding this rope with all his might for several hours. The storm abated; the ship was brought right, and our friend let go his rope. He expected a deputation would bring him the thanks of all the passengers, but they were unconscious of his merits. He thought at least there would be a contribution for a piece of plate for what he had done, but no piece of plate came. Even the captain did not seem very grateful, so he ventured, very distantly in a round-about-style to hint, that such valuable services as his, having saved the vessel, ought to be rewarded with some few words of gratitude at any rate; when he was shocked to hear the captain say, "What, do *you* think *you* saved the vessel? Why, I gave you that rope to hold to keep you out of the way, you did a world of mischief till I had you quiet." So now, mark you, there are some people who are wanting to do so much; they think they can certainly save themselves, and there they stand holding the rope with their clenched teeth and their feet tightly fixed, while they are really doing no more than our poor friend, who was thus befooled. If ever you get to heaven, you will find that everything you did towards your own salvation, was about as useful as what this man did when he was holding the rope; that in fact, the safety of the vessel lies somewhere else and not in you; and that what is wanting with you is just to get you out of the way; and when you are out of the way, and are made a fool of, then Christ comes in and shows his wisdom. While, perhaps, all the while you are bemoaning yourself that you should be so badly treated, it would not have been possible for you to be saved unless you had been put out of the way, that Almighty God might do the work from first to last.

III. And now I have to conclude with one or two words of ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVERS.

And so, my brother in Christ, you are greatly troubled are you? It is a common lot with us all. And so, you have nothing on earth to trust to now, and are going to be cast on your God alone? Your vessel is on her beam-ends, and now there is nothing for you but just to be rolled on the providence and care of God. What a blessed place to be rolled on! Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God and God alone! On some few occasions I have had troubles which I could not tell to any but my God, and I thank God that I have, for I learned more of my Lord then than at any other time. There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends. But when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nothing, he flies into his Father's arms, and how blessedly he is clasped there! So that, I say again, happy trouble that drives thee to thy Father! Blessed storm that wrecks thee on the rock of ages! Glorious billow that washes thee upon this heavenly shore! And now thou hast nothing but thy God to trust to what art thou going to do? To fret? To whine? O, I pray thee do not thus dishonour thy Lord and Master! Now, play the man, play the man of God. Show the world that thy God is worth ten thousand worlds to thee. Show rich men how rich thou art in thy poverty when the Lord God is thy helper. Show the strong man how strong thou art in thy weakness when underneath thee are the

everlasting arms. Now man, now man, *now* is thy time to glorify God. Thou knowest there was no room for thy courage before, but now there is space for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Our present mode of warfare bids fair to annihilate courage altogether, for now men fight at such a distance that the hand-to-hand fight is impossible. But in those brave days of old, when the troops of Rupert and of Cromwell met hand-to-hand, when up-hill the Puritanic legions spurred their horses against the hosts of "the man of blood," then there was room for bravery. Then men could fight not at two miles' distance, but foot-to-foot. Then there was room for the solitary bravo to lead the way against a multitude; then the scaling-ladder clicked on the top of the wall, and the brave man of the forlorn hope went up it step by step, with his cutlass between his teeth, until he reached the top; then men could make themselves famous; but now, what with iron ships and large Armstrong guns, there is hardly room for men to be courageous. But, believer, you, in your lonely distress, have returned to you "the brave days of old." When you had your regular income from the Consols, when your business prospered, when you had your children and your friends about you, why there was no room for you to perform heroic deeds of resignation and trust; but now you are stripped, now at it, for your foes are before you. When the Duke of Wellington asked a soldier what kind of dress he would like to wear if he had to fight another Waterloo—"Please your grace," said the man, "I'd like to fight in my shirt-sleeves." Well now, you have come to that; you have nothing now to encumber you; you can fight in your shirt-sleeves, and now is the time to win the victory. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord thy God shall certainly, as surely as he built the heavens and the earth, glorify himself in thy weakness, and magnify his might in the midst of thy distress. The Lord help us to lean wholly on him, and never on ourselves, and let his name be had in remembrance while the earth endureth. Amen, and Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S SERVANT—HIS DUTY, AND REWARD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 3RD, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."—John xii. 26.

How many persons are of the religion of the Greeks who are mentioned *in* this chapter! They would see Jesus, but they would not serve him. Impelled by curiosity they would know somewhat of this matter; they would investigate the claims of Christ to the Messiahship and they would consider the special truths by which he professes to illuminate the world, but beyond this they would not venture. They give their minds *to* criticise; they are not indifferent to the gospel, but they regard it with the same interest as that with which a naturalist would look upon a newly-discovered insect, or a geologist would study a section of the earth's crust; but as to personally feeling the hallowed influence of truth, they know not what it means. Many of these Greeks proceed much further; they feel an admiration for the character, and teaching of Jesus, and they express that admiration in honest encomiums; but see how hollow is their appreciation; they applaud the person whom they scorn to obey; they admire teachings which they will not practice; they listen to the divine Word, but they are hearers only, and not doers of the truth. Probably there are numbers in this assembly to whom the Christian religion has always been a subject of respectful interest; they have never blasphemed the name of Christ; they have not doubted the inspiration of Scripture; nay, they have studied God's Word; they have given a degree of attention to its doctrines, and they intend yet more fully to examine its revelations. How pleasant and hopeful are such marks of interest, but how far are many of these enquirers from true discipleship for their unhumbled hearts are not obedient to the dictates of the gospel; the cross is to them, too heavy a load to carry; they have not made up *their* minds to wear "Christ's yoke;" they had rather see his holiness and see his disciples imitate him, than themselves take up the cross daily and follow him. My hearers, allow me to remind you very solemnly, that a speculative religion which has curiosity as its impulse, a search after knowledge as its rule, and self-esteem as its root, can never save the soul. It is not for you to criticise, but to repent; it is not for you to judge, but to believe; it is not for you to admire, but to obey; it is

not for you to praise and applaud, but cheerfully to bow your necks to imitate and follow Christ. Nothing short of a religion which subjects us to personal service of Christ, which gives us a new heart and a right spirit, and compels us to feel that we are not our own, but bought with a price—nothing short of this will ever give lasting peace of mind, or bring us to the place where we shall see the face of God with delight.

Many proudly dream that to serve Christ would be dishonourable, and that they would bemean themselves by becoming humble followers of the Lamb. Let me remind them, that not thus thought those whose opinions we esteem. Even a heathen could say "To serve God is to reign." We know that that noblest of men, before the coming of John the Baptist, the greatest that had ever been born of woman—Moses, the king in Jeshuron, and the leader of God's hosts—has as his highest title—"Moses, the servant of God;" and even our Lord and Master, whose shoe's latchet we are not worthy to unloose, took upon himself the form of a servant, and though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered. Since the days of our Redeemer, the greatest in the Church of Christ have been the servants of all, and those who have attained to the highest dignities and honours which it is in the power of Christ's Church to confer, have been those who joyfully stooped to the most menial occupations, and being willing to be less than the least, became the greatest of all. Let us imitate him who was "King of kings," and yet a "Servant of servants." Let us follow him who is girt about the paps with a golden girdle and wraps the light about him as a garment, and yet unrobed himself, and took a towel, like a servant, that he might wash his disciples' feet. The motto of the Prince of Wales is "*Ich dien*,"—"I serve;" it should be the motto of every prince of the blood-royal of heaven. Let every Christian write this now upon his crest—"*I serve*," and, from this day forth, wherever he is, let him not seek lordship, let him leave that to the Gentiles and to a carnal world, but let him seek ministry and service, being willing to do anything or to be anything by which he may profit the body of Christ, which is the Church.

We will now endeavour, as the Blessed Spirit shall aid us, to expound its three-fold teaching. You will mark, first of all, *plain directions for a very honourable office*—"If any man serve me, let him follow me;" in the second place, *most generous stipulations from a noble Master*—"Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" and thirdly, *most glorious rewards for imperfect services*—"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

I. We have here PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR A VERY HONOURABLE OFFICE. "If any man serve me, let him follow me." A golden precept, written on a tablet of ivory.

I speak the sentiments of the majority of those present when I say, *we would all of us like to minister to Christ.* We feel that if he were here now, there would be nothing which we would not do for him. The word used in our text three times might very properly be translated thus—"If any man would act the part of a deacon towards me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my deacon be; and he that acts as a deacon towards me shall be honoured of my Father." The word "deacon" in the original Greek means nothing but a servant,

and every deacon should be the cheerful, laborious, and faithful servant of the Church. Now, what was the part of a deacon in the early Church? It was service to the people of God of all sorts and kinds. Who among us would blush to be the deacons of Christ, his body servants, his attendants? Would we not wait upon him? We would be his servants to the very fullest extent. I think we should consider ourselves ennobled for life if we might cast our garments in the way, that He might be saved from a miry place in the road. Would we not feed Him? There should be such a feast in our house as never was before. We would submit to hunger for ourselves, if we might but supply his wants; and I think if the twelve poor fishermen were with him, we would not shut one of them out, but ask them all home. We ourselves would leave our houses, and stand in the street all night, to let them have rest; for we feel that, if the Blessed One were here, it were so high an honour to contribute in any degree to his comfort, or to show in any way our respect for him, that nothing would be too hard,—nothing impossible for us to perform. Permit me to say, however, that very much of this is mere sentiment; that, in fact, we do not know ourselves; and that, in the case of many here present, if Christ were here in the same guise in which he came the first time, they would not receive him, but the reverse; their doors would be shut in his face, and, peradventure, they might even join in the blood-thirsty cry of "Let him be crucified!" All this talk of generosity and homage to be offered to Jesus is to a great extent mere sentiment—mere talk, and we should do no such thing when it came to the practical push. For, mark me, if we really would do these things, we can do them now. If it be true that we would minister to Christ, and be servants and deacons towards him, it is in our power to do so now as much as if He were on earth; and, inasmuch as we live in the neglect of this duty, we must not delude ourselves into the notion that, if such-and-such a thing should happen, we should act differently from what we do now. This sentimentalism about entertaining Christ has at the bottom of it the idea that we should be *honouring ourselves* by it. Now this is not the spirit that gives a worthy friendship towards Christ. He that loves Christ really serves *him*, not to be honoured *by* him, but to give him honour. We, forsooth, would gladly receive the Lord into our guest chamber, because men would say of us—"*He* entertained the Lord of glory! He was honoured with his company!" But, oh! if, instead, men would say—"Yonder fool disgraced himself by harbouring the mendicant impostor. He entertained the man whom we call Beelzebub." I think there are many who now talk so well of Christ who would decline the privilege of entertaining Jesus if all the world were against him.

But, dear friends, I say again, if any of you would serve Christ it is now in your power, for the directions given are meant for all time, and may be carried out *to-day*. It seems from my text that to follow Christ, or to imitate him, is really to serve him. I think we can plainly see this. "Oh," saith one, "I should like *to do something to prove that I really would obey my Lord;* I profess to be his servant, and I would show that I am not a servant in name only, but that whatsoever my Master saith unto me that will I do." Well, the opportunity is before you

to-day; imitate Christ, and you then prove your obedience. This command to you may be summed up in this—"Be like me." If you would know what he would have you do, see what he did himself. His own life is your law, written in living characters. No better proof can you give that you are not a lip-server, but a real disciple, than by diligently and scrupulously copying Christ even to the least jot and tittle.

"Oh," saith another, "I would joyfully *assist him in his wants.* I would supply him with bread; I would give him the cup of cold water to drink; I would not let him say again 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head;' I would never let him want." Imitate him, then, and you can do it, for what did he do but distribute of his substance to the poor? Did he not care for the wants of all men? Is it not written of him "He went about doing good?" If you would supply *his* wants behold him in his poor saints; if you would feed *him*, see the mouths of his hungry children; if you would clothe *him*, see the backs of his naked ones; if you would succour *him*, relieve the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, and those that have no helper. Imitate him in the generousness of his life; care for the wants of men; follow him in this, and you will have served him in supplying *his* wants:

"Lord, thou hast brethren here below,
Flesh of thy flesh through grace;
Teach us to see *thee* in thy saints,
Thy sorrows in their face."

"In them thou may'st be clothed and fed,
And visited and cheer'd:
And in their accents of distress
My Saviour's voice is heard.

Thy face, with reverence, and with love,
We in thy poor would see!
O let us rather beg our bread
Than keep it back from thee."

"But," saith another, "I would *do something to cheer him;* I think, if he were here, I would endeavour to smoothe a few of the furrows from his marred brow; I would labour to make the heart of the Man of Sorrows rejoice in some measure, and be glad in some degree; I would lay down my life to give him peace who is my soul's peace and rest." You can do it; you can do it. If you would serve him thus and cheer his heart, *follow him;* for this is the solace of his sorrow, the reward of his labours—the obedience of his children to his command. This is the spoil which he divideth with the mighty; this is the prey which he taketh from the strong, that all his saints should be like himself in all righteousness and true holiness. This is the travail of his soul which he seeth and is satisfied when you are conformed to his image, and show forth his character among the sons of men. Oh! if you are Christ-like, you have done more to make Christ happy than all the songs of the angels. If men shall say of you, "That man has been with Jesus, and has learned of him;" you have given Jesus better music than cherubim and seraphim can yield.

"Yes," I hear another say, "but *I would honour him.* If he were here I would climb the trees and strew the branches in his way; how would I gladly run before, and cry, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Would you thus serve him, by honouring him and extolling his name? You can do it. Follow him; live as he lived; act as he acted; and you have honoured him more completely than by strewing palm-branches or throwing your clothes in the road. For when is Christ most honoured? When his saints are most sanctified. When is his name the most esteemed? When the sons of God walk the most carefully, the most prayerfully, and the most closely with their God. You *can* to-day serve Christ if you will to-day humbly take his plain directions, exactly imitate his example, and closely follow in his steps.

Beloved friends, I think we have made it clear enough that there is a possibility of serving Christ, of deaconizing towards Christ by the imitation of his character. Now I quoted the Greek word "deaconizing" because it was the means when I was looking into the verse, of giving me an illustration of this subject. You remember that on the first sabbath of last month we had in our midst, the venerable Mar Yohanan, a presbyter of the Nestorian Church at Oroomiah, and with him a deacon whose name was Mar Isaak. These two men had performed an almost incredible journey. They had walked the entire distance from the borders of Persia; over the mountains of Armenia and Circassia; across the steppes of Russia; and from Russia right through Prussia, Germany, and Holland, till at last they arrived in London. Now, I could but notice how the deacon, the servant, carefully attended in all things to the venerable presbyter whom we saw amongst us, how he marked his every look that he might not for a moment appear to neglect his reverend leader. Probably on that day when Yohanan the presbyter, first thought of this journey, he addressed Isaak thus—"Isaak, art thou a true servant?" "Yes," saith he, "ever since the Church made me deacon I have loved thee as my own soul, and I would gladly do aught for thy comfort." "Then," saith he, "If thou wouldest serve me, *follow me.*" But must I leave my children and my household?" "Verily," saith the presbyter; "it must even be so, for I also shall leave behind me my wife and children, and go forth a long and weary journey; many a hundred miles, to Britain, where there are many who love our Lord, and who may help the persecuted saints in this region." Now came the pinch, and Isaak, if he would serve the presbyter, must *follow* him. He does not decline the service. When he accepted the office of the deacon, he resolved to be really the servant of the Church, and her minister, and he is now ready to undertake the journey with his presbyter. I think I see them sallying forth. They journey among the Kurds, a savage people always thirsting for the Christians' blood, with more than Mahometan hatred of Christ. Perhaps Isaak is faint-hearted, and would fain turn back. "If any man would serve me, let him follow me," says the hoary presbyter, as he strikes his staff upon the ground and advances fearless of the foe. They pass one danger but to encounter another. A mountain is in their way lifting its snowy crest even to the sky; the grey-bearded preacher goes first, and he cries, "Isaak, if thou wouldest serve me, follow me;" and on they go,

climbing from crag to crag, along the unfrequented path where scarce the wild goat has found a footing; soon they travel through the valley, and across the barren, snowy, pathless wilderness, the presbyter saying continually, "Brother, if thou wouldest deaconize towards me, follow me, for now it is that it shall be proved to the world that thou art a true servant of the Church, and art willing to follow the presbyter to the world's end." He did follow him right faithfully, and they reached their journey's end together. Now, this is just what Jesus Christ says to us. We are all his deacons, his servants. We all engaged, in the day when we gave ourselves to Him, that we would take up our cross and follow him; and he points to-day to some high mountain, saying, "If thou wouldest serve me, follow me." He asks you not to lead, he himself has gone before; he calls you to no labour which he has not himself already accomplished. Oh! can you say in your heart to-day—

"Through floods and flames if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where he goes;
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose?"

This is true service, the best that can be rendered, to follow where he leads the way, let the way be never so rough or arduous, to persevere to the end, even though the end be a martyr's death.

Come, brethren, and especially those who are beginners, and have but lately enlisted in Christ's cause, let me mark you out Christ's way, and then, if you would serve him, follow him. I know the proud flesh wants to serve Christ, by striking out new paths. Proud man has a desire to preach new doctrine, to set up a new Church; to be an original thinker, to judge, and consider, and do anything but obey. This is no service to Christ. He that would serve Christ must follow him; he must be content to tread only in the old footsteps, and go only where Christ has led the way. It is not for you and me to be originals; we must be humble copies of Christ. There must be nothing about our religion of our own inventing; it is for us to lay thought, and judgment, and opinion at the feet of Christ, and do what he bids us, simply because he gives the command. Look then disciples at your Lord. I think I see the Saviour; oh! that you would follow him to-day! I think I see him coming. 'Tis his first public entry on the world; and whither goeth he? 'Tis the beginning of his manifest ministry among men, he is about to show you what should be the beginning of yours. He goeth unto Jordan; there stands the Baptist, and the willing crowds are baptized with the baptism of repentance. As John standeth there, lo! the Son of Man himself appears; and John says, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But our Master, whom if we would serve we must follow, says, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He descends into the stream; he is buried beneath the water; and as he cometh up from that immersion, the heaven is opened, and the Spirit descendeth upon him like a dove. If thou wouldest serve him, follow him. "But—but—but—." Alas my brother, this is not a fitting word for a disciple, you forget your service when you begin to question. If you would serve him, follow him. Your business as a servant is not to

object but to obey. Imagine that you ask your servant to fill a bath with water. "But—" You say, "I must have it filled;" but she questions again, and again, and again, and at last flatly refuses to do more than sprinkle it with a few drops. Do you call her a servant any longer? Methinks no. So there are some of you who see most clearly that your master was baptized at the commencement of his public life, and yet you will be raising questions where there is no room for questions; you *will* neglect a duty which is as plain in Scripture as the very Deity of Christ; you will turn aside from a baptism which is as plainly taught in express words as even the doctrine of justification by faith: you do not take up your service as you should. "But, it is not essential," say you. Is that a servant's business? "But what good will it be?" Is this a question for a servant? "If any man will serve me"—Christ does not say—"Let him question me; let him be asking me why and wherefore I command him to do such a thing." No, no; but, "Let him follow me." "But I dread the publicity, I fear the ordinance." It is your proud flesh that feareth it; subdue it under your feet, and take up your cross, for there are far heavier crosses than this to carry. Thus your Master puts it—"If any man will serve me, let him follow me."

He now cometh from Jordan, and the Spirit leadeth him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. You, too, must be tempted. Do not think when you are tempted that, therefore, you are out of Christ. No; if you would be his servant, you must follow him, and must be tempted too. You must be assailed in many points; the arrows must fly from above and from beneath; you must be tried on all hands and in all ways. Run not from the conflict, for if any man would serve Christ, he must follow him through the hottest temptations as well as through the brightest joys. Now the Master comes forth boldly and begins to preach, and teach, and labour. If you would serve him, follow him; labour for him; in some way or other teach his gospel. If you cannot teach it to the thousands teach it to the tens; if you cannot converse with multitudes, converse with one upon the well, as Christ did at Sychar. If you would be his servant, let his life be your life written large, and let your life be the miniature, the condensation of the life of Christ. You see the Master bears bold witness before his adversaries. He beards the Pharisee to his face; he upbraids the hypocrites who oppose him. Follow him, if you would serve him. Let there not be a single foe before whose face you would fear his cause to plead. Speak up for his name; let no blush suffuse your cheek; speak his name before kings, nor yield to sinful shame. But see, the Master cometh into the black cloud of reproach; they say he hath a devil and is mad. Follow him there. Now, ye servants of God, now is the trying hour; now follow him; be rejected, and despised, and hooted at with him, and sing as you go through it all—

> "If on my face, for thy dear name,
> Shame and reproach shall be,
> I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
> If thou'lt remember me."

See he comes to die. If thou wouldest serve him, follow him. Be ready to be brought before the judgment-seat for his name. Be

ready to yield thy life up at his command, and if the martyr days should ever return, give thy blood as freely as thou wouldest give water from the well; or if they come not, spend that blood, and the life it gives thee, devoting every hour of every day, and every moment of every hour to his cause, whose thou art and whom thou dost profess to serve. No new fashions, no new views, and opinions—the imitation of Christ is the only mode of service, and the Master lays it down before each of you—ask your consciences whether you have ever really served him—"If any man would serve me, let him follow me." Walk in the way of Christ, it is the King's highway. I pass the question round these galleries and this vast area—Are you serving Christ? "Well, I subscribe to a charity." Are you serving Christ? "I intend to build a row of almshouses." My dear brethren, you may do all this, and yet not be serving Christ, for your Master tells you that to serve him is to follow him. Have you followed him? Have you believed in him? Is he all-in-all to you, and do you now make his life the guiding-star of your life; and do you desire to be, and are you, as far as is possible to man—made like unto him in all things that you may be obedient unto his will? God help us that desiring to serve Immanuel, we may do it by following him!

II. We must come to our second point—GENEROUS STIPULATIONS FROM A NOBLE MASTER. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

Whoever heard of such conditions as these from an ordinary master? The master is in the drawing room, the servant is in the kitchen; the master is in the parlour, the servant is in the workshop; the master sitteth at the table with his friends, the servant girdeth himself to wait thereat. What, I say, what generous stipulations doth the master make—"Where I am, there shall also my servant be!" Well now, to return to the illustration we used before—"Where I am, there shall also my deacon be"—still using old Yohanan and Isaak as your pattern, you will recollect that wherever the old presbyter went, there was Isaak at his side. I dare say many a night they slept under the broad shadow of a tree, and where Yohanan was there the deacon was too. Were they entertained by generous friends?—they shared the same couch. At times they sat around the genial fire, but they sat together; anon they shivered in the winter's cold, but they shivered side by side. Their lot during the long journey was the same, and when they arrived here they sat with us at the same table; we spoke to them as to those who were intimate friends, and I know that throughout the whole of their romantic voyage, where the presbyter was there the deacon was also.

Do you not see that this was the rule which Christ carried out all his life long? He went to a wedding; is it not written, the disciples of Jesus were there. Jesus once rejoiced in spirit over the elect ones, the babes and sucklings to whom God had revealed himself; yes, but his disciples shared the joy because Satan fell like lightning from heaven, and even the devils were subject to them. The Master often went to the house of Lazarus; and Martha and Mary made a great feast, but the disciples were always there. Sometimes they went to a Pharisee's house—a very respectable gentleman—and if Christ had been an ordinary man he might have said—"I cannot take those poor fishermen with me; it will lower my character if they see what tag-rag follow

at my heels." But no, where he was there his servants were. And you know, beloved, once on a time he rode in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, but he did not say to his disciples—"Now you had better keep out of the way; this is a day in which I am to be honoured, and I think you will rather spoil the pageantry if they see you in your fishermen's dress walking with me." No, but where he was there were his servants also. And when the multitudes cried "Hosanna," and welcomed the Master, the welcome was shared by the disciples. Then there came his last great feast. "With desire," said he, "have I desired to eat this passover with you"—it was "*with you*"—he could not enjoy that last supper except with them. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" share and share alike; their lot my lot; my portion their portion for ever.

Mark, beloved, if the Lord thus shared his comforts among his disciples, he expected them to share his discomforts. He was in a ship in a great storm, and the disciples must be with him, though they are sore afraid. He goes to Gethsemane; he sweats, as it were, great drops of blood; his disciples must be with him there, even though they cannot bear it, and are asleep. And though in his last passion they could not be with him, for he must tread the wine-press alone, yet, mark you, his disciples were with him afterwards, for if he was brought before kings, so were they; if he stood falsely accused, so, in after years did they. If he died upon the cross a martyr, so did they; and so, for three hundred years, where Christ was *in death*, there his Church was too, for the gibbet, and the cross, and the stake, and the block, and the bloody axe, had stern work to do with Christ's Church, that it might be fulfilled—"Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

Beloved, this stands true to you and me this morning. Where Christ was we must be. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." Blessed be his name, he is gone to heaven now; and where he is there shall his servants be, in the same heaven in his Father's house. Yes, he has mounted to his throne, and where he is there shall his servants be. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit on my throne, even as I have overcome and have sat down upon my Father's throne." He is in the joy of his Father; and where he is there must his servants be; we also must be partakers of his joy that his joy may be full. Lo, he cometh! The trumpet soundeth! Jesus cometh; the second advent draweth nigh; but when he cometh, all his saints shall come with him. My God shall come, and all his saints with him. He reigneth, kings and princes, your sceptres are not your own; he comes to take them from your hands, and your crowns from your heads, Jesus comes to "reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway," and we shall reign with him, for "Where I am, there also shall my servant be." I think you understand, then, that the conditions of the service are these: fare ill or fare well, we are to have joint stock with Christ; we are to take him for better or for worse, in shame and in honour, in reproach and in esteem, in riches and in poverty, in life and in death, in time and in eternity. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." I love my Master's conditions! He is a noble Master! Shall I ever blush to go where he goes? God forbid, for if I do, I may be afraid lest at the last he should deny me, and should not permit me to be where he is.

I have heard an old story, somewhat amusing, which will illustrate this point, and then I shall leave it. I have heard that a noted Methodist preacher, who commenced his ministry very early in life suffered not a little at first because of his humble origin, and unpromising exterior. Being sent on the circuit plan to a certain house on a Saturday night, to be in readiness for preaching on the Sunday, the good woman, who did not like the look of him, sent him round to the kitchen. There was a serving-man, who served them at odd times, and also worked in the coal mine, or at the forge, who was surprised to see the minister in the kitchen with him when he came from labour. John, rough as he was, welcomed the despised preacher, and tried to cheer his heart. The minister shared John's meal of porridge, John's bed in the cockloft, and John's humble breakfast, and walked to the House of God with John in the morning. Now, the preacher was a notable man, though then unknown, and he had not long opened his mouth before the congregation perceived that there was somewhat in him, and the good hostess, who had so badly entertained him began to feel a little uneasy. When the sermon was over there were many invitations for the minister to come home, and the hostess, fearful of losing her now honoured guest, begged he would walk home with her, when, to her surprise, he said "I supped with John, I slept with John, I breakfasted with John, I walked here with John, and I'll walk home with John." So when dinner came he was, of course, entreated to come into the chief room, for many friends wished to dine with this young minister, who was so much admired and esteemed, but no, he would dine in the kitchen; he had supped with John, he had breakfasted with John, and he would dine with John. They begged him to come into the parlour, and at last he consented on the condition that John should sit at the same table. "For," he said, very properly, "John was with me in my humiliation, and I will not sit down to dine unless he be with me in my exaltation." So on they went till the Monday morning, sleeping at night with John, and persevering in the same rule—"I supped with John, I slept with John, I breakfasted with John, I walked with John, I'll walk home with John, and I'll dine with John, for John was with me at the beginning, and he shall be with me to the end." Brethren, this story may be turned to account thus; our Master came into this world once, and they sent him into the servants' place; they sent him where the poor and despised ones where, and said "Live with them; the manger and the cottage are good enough for thee. He lived with poverty and supped with toil." Now the name of Christ is honoured, and kings and cardinals, popes and bishops, say, "Master, come and dine with us." Yes, the proud emperor and philosopher would have him sup with them, but still he says—"No, I was with the poor and afflicted when I was on earth, and I will be with them to the end, and when the great feast is made in heaven the humble shall sit with me, and the poor and despised who were not ashamed of me, of them will I not be ashamed when I come in the glory of my Father, and all my holy angels with me."

III. We have, thirdly, A GLORIOUS REWARD FOR IMPERFECT SERVICES. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

I am persuaded that if any man will serve Christ in the way Christ

bids him, that is, by following him; if any man is content, not to do as his father or grandmother did, but will follow Christ and not man; if any man will break through all customs, all regulations, all rotten proprieties, and just do as Christ did, and imitate him in all things—that man will have honour, first of all, *in his own soul.* He shall have such blessed peace of conscience, he shall have such sweet fellowship with Christ, he shall have such profound peace from the Father's right hand, that it shall be apparent to him that the Father honours him. Look at John Knox, who never feared the face of man; he followed Christ as far as his light went, and how greatly the Father honoured him with unruffled serenity of heart. What calm that gigantic spirit had; when the world was all in uproar against him, how peacefully he smiled in the face of the roaring of the multitude, for God honoured him with an indwelling consciousness of being right before the Lord.

Then, again, I am persuaded that God will honour such a man *by success, by prospering him in his ministry, and in whatsoever he may attempt for Christ.* Why is it that so little success rests on some who labour for God? Because they do not serve Christ in the way he would have them serve him, by imitating him. Ecclesiastical courts, rubrics, rules, forms, liturgies, and such like bonds confine too many, who if they would snap the fetter would be honoured of the Lord. If there were in connection with this Church anything which I thought to be unscriptural, I could not expect to have God's blessing in it; and I do think if any man here be a member of a Church, of which he can say, "Well, there are many wrong things in it, but I do not think I ought to come out," you cannot expect God's blessing. He that would serve Christ, must follow Christ in little things as well as in great things. Whenever we say—"Well, there are some things wrong in my position, but I can do more good where I am," we set ourselves up for masters instead of servants. Our business is, conscientiously to follow, as far as our light goes, the example of Christ in every respect and in all things, and if this should entail the giving up of our present position and usefulness, we must not consider results, but instantly obey imperative commands. I claim for my Master immediate, unquestioning, unqualified obedience to all his words; and I demand of you in his name that ye renounce everything which prevents your rendering perfect, unhesitating service to his person and doctrine. Whether as members of a Church, or a community, or in a trade, you have anything that prevents your following Christ, leave everything and come right out, for you cannot expect great success from God till you have honoured Christ by following him in all things. If you think you know better than Christ, why then I have done with you. If you think that you can lead a better life, or set a better example, ye are proud indeed! Or, if you imagine that in your position you may tolerate yourselves in disobeying his command, you talk as one of the foolish women talketh, but not as a disciple of Christ. I say again, if you would be honoured of God, you must serve Christ by following him.

And lastly, such who thus serve Christ, by following him, *shall have great honour at the last.* We will suppose that the Prince of Wales is wrecked on a certain voyage, and is cast on shore with only one

companion. The prince falls into the hands of barbarians, and there is an opportunity for his companion to escape; but he says, "No, my prince, I will stay with you to the last, and if we die, we will die together." The prince is thrown into a dungeon; his companion is in the prison with him, and serves him and waits upon him. He is sick—it is a contagious fever—his companion nurses him—puts the cooling liquid to his mouth—and waits on him with a mother's care. He recovers a little; the fond attendant carries the young prince, as he is getting better into the open air, and tends him as a mother would her child. They are subject to deep poverty—they share their last crust together; they are hooted at as they go through the streets, and they are hooted at together. At last, by some turn in Providence, it is discovered where the prince is, and he is brought home. Who is the man that the queen will delight to honour? "Make way for this man; he was with my son in prison—he was with my son when he was near death—he nursed him—he suffered with him—he was reproached for him." I fancy she would look with greater affection upon the poor servant than upon the greatest statesman; and I think that as long as she lived she would remember him above all the rest, for she would say, "He was with my son in all his sorrow and affliction, and I will honour him above all the mighty ones in the land." And now, dear brothers and sisters, if you and I shall be with Christ, the King's Son, if we shall suffer with him, and be reproached with him, if we shall follow him anywhere and everywhere, making no choice about the way, whether it shall be rough or smooth, whether it shall be green sward or miry bog—if we can go with him to prison and to death, if such times come, then we shall be the men whom heaven's king delighteth to honour. "Make room for him, ye angels! Make room ye cherubim and seraphim! Stand back ye peers of heaven's realm! Here comes the man; he was poor, mean, and afflicted; but he was with my Son, and was like my Son. Come hither, man! There, take thy crown, and sit with my Son in his glory, for thou wast with my Son in his shame!" Oh that the Holy Ghost would teach us how to follow Jesus, and enable us to tread in his steps.

I conclude by again putting this important question—Are you with Christ to-day? Have you put your hand into Christ's hand to be Christ's for ever? My hearers, the speaker wants to make this question ring in your ears—Are you with Christ to-day? For he that is not with him is against him, and he that followeth not with him scattereth abroad. Dost thou trust Christ? Oh, sinner, if thou dost not I beseech thee trust him now, and thou art saved. If thou hast trusted Christ is it the true trust? for if it be it will make thee follow him, and thou wilt be obedient to his every wish and word. Faith, such as the Holy Spirit gives, always leads to obedience. Is it so? Is it so? If not, humble thyself before God. Believe thou in him who is the only foundation upon which a sinner's hope can be built. Take up thy cross daily, and through evil report and through good report follow thou the Master even to the end, and the Lord God, the God of heaven and earth, the fountain of honour, shall glorify thee when Christ cometh in his kingdom.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SERMON FOR GLEANERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 10TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."—Ruth ii. 15, 16.

ALL the world dependeth upon the labour of the field, and the king himself is served of the plough and of the sickle. The dwellers in the country who watch the up-springing blade through all its perils, who mark the ear as it bursts from its sheath, and who anxiously observe it until it hangeth downward through ripeness, and becometh yellow in the sun—these, being brought constantly into contact with clods and crops, are not able to forget their entire dependance upon "the staff of life." One can hardly live where the operations of husbandry are carried on, without often looking up to the God of Providence in anxious prayer, and anon, lifting up the heart in grateful praise. But the most of us are condemned to live in this huge wilderness of bricks, where scarcely a green thing salutes our eyes; where, if we try to rear a plant, it is but a sickly thing, neither tempting for beauty, nor fragrant with perfume. In the absence of the bright-eyed flowers, it is small wonder if we grow a little blind towards our mother earth. We are too apt to think that *we* are independent of the operations of the country; that our trade, our commerce, our manufactures, are sufficient to support us; forgetting all the while, that in vain is yonder forest of masts unless the earth shall yield her fruit; in vain the emporium, the exchange, and the place of merchandize, unless the land be ploughed and harrowed, and at last yield to the husbandman his reward. I would that I could recall to your memories, O ye dwellers in the city, how much ye depend upon the Lord God of the earth for your daily bread. Doth your food fall like manna from the skies? Do ye create it at the forge, or fashion it in the loom or on the wheel? Cometh it not of the earth, and is it not the Lord who giveth to the fertile womb of earth the power to yield its harvests? Cometh not the dew from heaven, and the sunshine from above, and do not these bring to *us* our bread as well as to those who abide in the midst of the fields? Let us not forget this time of the harvest, nor be unthankful for the bounty of the wheatsheaf; let us not forget to plead with God that he would be pleased to give us suitable weather for the ingathering of the precious grain, and when it shall be ingathered,

let us not sullenly keep silence, but with the toiling swains who, well-pleased, behold the waving yellow crop, let us lift up the shout of harvest-home, and thank the God who covereth the valleys with corn, and crowneth the year with his goodness.

I would order my speech, this morning, so as to act in your ears as the harvest-bell in our midland counties. I have there noticed a bell ringing early in the morning, and again towards the evening, which, I am told, is intended to tell the people the hour when they may go into the fields to glean, and when they must leave the field and go back to their homes. My sermon shall be as simple as the ringing of a bell; but if it suffice to remind you of the sheaves and of the harvest; if it shall but make you thank our God who giveth us the fruit of the earth, I shall be well content. Tell me not that this is not a proper theme for the Sabbath day. I wot ye know not what ye say. Did not the disciples of Jesus walk through the corn-fields on the Sabbath, and did not the Master make the fields themselves the subjects of his sermons? I fear not his disapprobation when I say, on this hallowed day, "Lift up now your eyes, and behold the fields are ripe already unto the harvest." Do you think that the outward creation is sinful, and that God would be worshipped on Sabbaths with closed eyes, and vacant faces, which must not look on flowers and fields? There is no impurity in green grass, or flowers, or sailing-clouds, or rippling waves, or ripening corn. To the believing ear, the footsteps of the Bountiful Father are everywhere audible, and the revolving seasons do but reveal the varied attributes of God. We may gather from every rustling ear a song, and listen in every harvest-field to a sermon which angels might stoop to hear. 'Tis no unhallowed theme. Come with me to the harvest-field—may the Master come with us—and let us talk awhile of other things than harvests, though the harvest shall be the metaphor on which we will fashion our speech.

A word or two about the gleaning. Under the Jewish dispensation, gleaning was one of the rights of the people. The farmer was forbidden to reap the corners of the field, and if he should have left a sheaf by over-sight in the field, he must not go back for it; it was to be left for the widow and for the fatherless, and for the poor that dwelt in the land. Nay, the rights of gleaning went further than wheat and barley; the olive-tree was to be beaten but once, and they were to leave the gleanings to the poor. So with the vintage; when they gathered the grapes they were not utterly to clean the branches of the vines, but leave sufficient to give a taste of the delicious fruit to the poorest of the land. I would not have our Christian husbandmen less liberal under the gospel dispensation than the farmers were under the Mosaic law. As Boaz in his generosity gave to Ruth more than she could legally claim, so let no possessor of the soil be questioning about the legal rights of the poor to gleaning, but let him rather open his gates sooner than the Jewish husbandman would have done, and let him sometimes bid his men leave handfuls on purpose for the poor. Grieved am I to observe that the custom grows with many farmers now-a-days, to rake their fields and get all they can from the poor of the village; and I believe some would rake the stubble seven times if they could but get one ear

more, and leave less for gleaning. I would not gather into my barn, were I a farmer, a sheaf, every ear of which rustled with the cries of the poor. I would not have the poor man's curse for all the rich man's field, nor make the poor dwellers in the village dissatisfied the whole year round because of a paltry handful of corn which I had added to the stock of my bursting barns. Specially you who are Christian men, I repeat it in your hearing,—be not less liberal than was the Jew; and if of old when there were types and shadows they left good gleanings for the poor; scatter ye with a liberal hand now that we have come to the substance and the fulness of the gospel. Rob not the poor man of his little, but earn his blessing by your abundant generosity in the time of reaping your fields.

I have now to invite you to other fields than these. I would bring you to the field of gospel truth. My Master is the Boaz. See here, in this precious book is a field full of truthful promises, of blessings rich and ripe. The Master standeth at the gate, and affords us welcome. Strong men, full of faith, like reapers, reap their sheaves and gather in their armfuls. Would you were all reapers, for the harvest truly is plenteous. But if not reapers, may ye be as the maidens of Boaz. I see some servants who do not so much reap themselves as partake of that which others have reaped; I know we have many in this Church who are glad to eat the sweets and feed upon the fat things of the kingdom when they are brought forth each Sabbath-day, in the ministry of the Word. But I see trembling yonder, outside the gate, a little company to whom I am to address myself to-day; they are not reapers, they have not strength enough of faith to take the big sheaves; they are not as yet like household servants; they are not peaceful enough in their consciences to sit down and eat, and dip their morsel in the vinegar and be satisfied; but they are *gleaners*, and they are saying as they stand at the gate, "Would that I might find favour in the sight of my Lord, that I might even glean in this field, for I should then be content if I might gather here and there an ear of gospel grace." I am sent to you. My Master sendeth me as one of his young men, and thus he biddeth me say unto you, "Come into the field and glean wheresoever you will, and if in the gleaning you should grow strong and become reapers, reap and carry home the sheaves for yourselves."

I. First then, like Boaz, I shall ask the question, "WHO IS THIS DAMSEL?" in order that I may find out who these gleaners are who are invited into the fields of Christ, that they may glean the handfuls that are let fall on purpose for them.

"Who is this damsel?" The first answer is, *she is a Moabitess and a stranger*. Ah! I know thee, poor timid heart. Thou sayest, "I am sprung of an evil stock, an heir of wrath even as others; my nature is depraved and vile; how can I hope, such an one as I am, that I should ever be allowed to go into the Master's field, and glean of his good corn of grace? Oh! sir, did you know what I feel of my lost and helpless state, could you but perceive how base I am in my own eyes, because I have been so long a stranger to God, and an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, I think you would scarce invite me to glean in the field at all." Verily, my sister, thou art the very person to whom I am sent,

for it was a Moabitish damsel upon whom Boaz set his heart, and it was to her that he sent his message, "Abide thou fast by my maidens; go not in any other field."

But I ask again who this damsel is, and she answers, "I am not only by nature a stranger, *but I must confess that I am now in my condition miserable and poor;* I cannot buy Christ's grace; I can do nothing to win his love. Once I thought I had some good works, but now I have none. Once I relied upon ceremonies, but I have given them up, for I find no comfort in them. I am utterly poor—so poor, that I despair of ever in the future being richer than I am now. I am helpless; I am hopeless; I am nothing; yea, I am less than nothing. Alas! I am such a miserable beggar, that I am not worthy of the least of all his mercies." Dost thou say this? Right glad am I, then, to hear thee use such language, for unto thee, again, am I sent, and unto thee am I bidden to give the gracious invitation—"Come into the field and glean even among the sheaves."

Now the gleaner whom I describe is not only in her own experience an alien and a stranger, and in her own present condition naked and poor, and miserable, *but she hath, despite all this, a decision for the Lord God of Israel.* I think I hear her say, "If I perish, I will perish looking to the cross of Christ; I have nothing of my own to bring, but I come just as I am. The Lord knoweth I have no other dependance but upon the blood and the finished righteousness of Jesus Christ. I forswear the gods of Moab in whom I once trusted; the world is now nothing to me; the pomps and vanities thereof have lost all their glory; as to myself, I abhor myself in dust and ashes. I would be Christ's, and if he will not have me, if I may not glean in his fields, I will never go elsewhere.

> 'If I perish I will pray,
> And perish only there.'"

It is marvellous the tenacity with which some of these timid souls will hold to Christ. Just as a man, the more fearful he is of sinking, clutches the plank with a more terrible earnestness; so have I seen some of these fearful souls lay hold on Jesus with a grip which neither death nor hell could unloose. Were the times of burning to come back again, many a wavering soul, that can scarce say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," would go singing to the stake; while many of those who are bold in words would prove cowardly in acts, and withdraw from Christ when it came to burning for him. Well, it is to thee that I am sent, poor timid gleaner; come in, come into the field, and we will see if we cannot let fall some handfuls on purpose for thee.

Our description, however, is far from being complete. *This gleaner is one who is exceedingly humble and self-emptied.* Just observe what she saith when Boaz takes notice of her—"Who am I, that I should find grace in thy sight, seeing that I am a stranger?" Ah! and the woman to whom I would speak this morning has such a low estimate of herself, that when she gets a grain of hope she thinks, "Ah! it is too good for me." When, sometimes, you half hope that Christ hath loved you and given himself for you, a sight of your unworthiness comes in, and you

say, "No, this can hardly be, that such an one, so mean and so despicable as I, should ever be regarded by the lovely eyes of Christ my Lord." I know you think not yourself to be pure, or fair, or lovely; and when you read such a passage as that, where Christ saith of his spouse, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee," tears come in your eyes, for you say, "Alas! he will never say that of me, for 'I am all defiled with sin, all unholy and unclean.' Should he search the world through, he would not find a more worthless one than I, and should he turn the heap over again and again, he could not find one that less deserved to be the object of his pity than I, poor unworthy I." Ay, but thou art just the person to whom I am sent! Thy Lord Jesus hath heard of thee, and he loveth such as thou art, for when thou art little in thine own eyes then art thou great in his, and when thou talkest thus bashfully of thyself then he loves to hear thy words, for they are words of truth. In very deed, thou art what thou sayest thou art, nothing but loathsomeness, and corruption, and depravity; and yet he who hath loved thee, notwithstanding all this, will never leave thee till thy corruption has been removed, till thy loathsomeness has been washed away, till for deformity thou hast matchless beauty, and for unholiness his perfect righteousness. I say to thee, even to thee are we sent to-day.

Once again, *these gleaners have a very high opinion of those who are true Christians.* You notice, Ruth says, "I am not like unto one of thy hand-maidens." No, and my poor gleaner yonder, she thinks the saints of God are such a blessed people, she is not like one of them. When she gets into her black experience she says, "If I were a child of God I should never be like this." Knowing her vileness and her imperfections she cries, "Ah! if I were one of Christ's chosen I should be much holier than I am; though I love his saints, I cannot dare to hope that I shall ever be numbered with them; my goodness can never reach so high as to be joined with them in visible fellowship." Ah! I know some of you feel that if you ever did get to heaven you would creep through some cranny in the door, and hide yourselves in some mouse-hole far away, where none could see you; and to-day, though in truth you are the best of the saints, you think yourselves the vilest of the vile; for many there be that are very rich in grace who think themselves miserably poor; while, on the other hand, many who say "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," are naked, and poor, and miserable. Poor Moabitess, long an alien, having gone far into sin, and now decided for Christ, with a sort of despairing hope that may be he will look upon thee, to-day—even to-day, he speaketh to thee. Open thine ear and hear him; forget thy kindred and thy father's house, for he greatly desireth thee, and he would have thee even now come to him and be espoused unto him for ever.

I need not prolong our description of the gleaners to whom I speak. The Holy Ghost, I hope, will find some of you out, and may he press home the truth to your hearts.

II. Having beckoned to the gleaner, I shall now, like Boaz, ADDRESS THE REAPERS. The ministers are the reapers, and thus speaks Boaz to them—"Let her glean, even among the sheaves, and reproach her not;

let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

The first command Christ gives to his ministers is—"Rebuke her not." Ah! I fear me, my brethren in the ministry, that we have often rebuked where we ought to have comforted, and perhaps our unwise speeches, when we did not mean to do it, have been very hard blows to the afflicted in Zion. It is an ill thing for the strong cattle to push with horn and shoulder. We are very apt, unless we have much trial and trouble ourselves, to lose the lady's hand which is so necessary for a physician of souls. We keep the lion's heart, but oh! the tender hand and the downy fingers, we are not so ready to keep these in dealing with sore consciences. I know some preachers who never went to Martin Luther's school; they may have prayer and meditation, but they have never been schooled by temptation; and if we are not much tempted ourselves, if we are not emptied from vessel to vessel ourselves, we are in very great danger when we are dealing with these Ruths, lest we be hard with them, and rebuke and reproach them, when instead thereof we should hear the Master say, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem." Now I take it that we do very much reproach these tender ones *when we set up standards in our ministry to which we tell them they must come or else perish.* Some do it in *experience.* I have heard old divines, and, like Elihu, I have been ready to rebuke my seniors when they have taught their experience, in all its length and breadth, as necessary for all the people of God. The experience of the advanced saint must never be set up as a standard for the young beginner. There are mountains for us to climb when our bones are firm, but these mountains are not for babes. There are depths into which we are to dive when we have learned the art of plunging into them, but these are not for little children, who must be dandled on the knee and fondled at the breast. When we describe some dark passage in our lives and say to the young convert—"You must have felt all this or you are not a child of God," we are reproaching where we ought to have comforted, and rebuking where we ought to have consoled. So have I seen a standard of *grace* set up. Some Christians are eminent in their graces; their faith is valorous; their courage defies all danger; their hope is bright and sparkling like a diamond; but if in our preaching we tell young converts that their graces must be equal in lustre to the fathers in the Church, what do we but rebuke Ruth when we ought to have let fall handfuls of corn for her to gather? And so, too, with regard to *doctrinal knowledge.* I have known some Christians well-schooled in these matters, and deeply read in theology who, when they meet with one who knows no more than this, that he is a sinner, and that Christ came to save sinners, will ask hard, wrinkled questions, which are more fit for an assembly of divines than for a babe in Christ; and because, forsooth, the little child cannot untie a gordian knot, because the babe cannot crack the hard shells of these theological nuts, they send him away and say, "The root of the matter is not in thee; thou hast not passed from death unto life." Oh! let us not do this, dear brother-reapers; let us sooner cut ourselves with our own sickle than cut

Ruth therewith; let us rather be patient, and very tender, and receive the weak in the faith, as Christ hath received them. Let us, like our Master, not over-drive the lambs, but carry them in our bosom, and gently lead them when they need our tenderness and our care. There is also another way in which some rebuke these gleaners, who should rather be invited and comforted—that is, by denying their faith when it is mixed with unbelief. It is marvellous, it is miraculous, that a spark of faith can live in the midst of an ocean of unbelief. You will find men who, at times, fear that they believe nothing; in their own apprehension they are so beclouded and bemisted that they have lost their way, and do not know where they are; and yet they are true believers for all that. Some of us have passed through crisis of our being in which, if we had been asked our very name, we could hardly have told it, for we were so utterly distressed, so lost and cast away by reason of overwhelming blasphemies, or incessant temptations, that we could scarce tell our right hand from our left. And were we therefore without faith? Nay, there was a little faith still; there was an undying principle still within us when death had made us wretched men. So we must not talk to these young beginners as though the uprising of their corruption disproved the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but we must succour them. We may tell them of the dragons we have fought, and the giants we have slain, but we must use discretion even in this; and when they are in the Slough of Despond, we must not leave them to sink there up to their very necks, but go like Help in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and lend them our hand to pull them out, for they may be in the right road even in the slough, and they may still have their faces to Zion though those faces may be besmeared with the mire and filth of that dreadful bog. Let us never rebuke or reproach these timid ones, but help and sustain them.

But further; Boaz gave another exhortation to the reapers—"*Let fall handfuls of purpose for her.*" In our ministry there should always be a corner cupboard for the tried and timid saints. I think there should never be a sermon without a Benjamin's mess for the children. There should be strong meat for the men, but there should always be milk for the babes. Ready to adapt our ministry to all sorts of people, if we forget any we should never forget these. My brother, wouldest thou minister to these gleaners? Let me remind thee, first, that our ministry must be *plain*, for these timid souls cannot feed on hard words. Dr. Manton once preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, and a great crowd went to listen to him. A poor man who had walked fifty miles to hear the good doctor, afterwards plucked him by the sleeve and said—"There was nothing for me this morning." The doctor had preached a very learned sermon, full of Greek and Latin quotations which the poor countryman could not understand; but the doctor had not expected him, and there was nothing for him. I think there should always be in our ministry some things for poor Ruth; so plain and so simple that the wiseacres will turn up their noses and say, "What platitudes!" Never mind, if Ruth gets a handful of corn, our Master at the last shall know who did his errand best, and served him with a perfect heart. And then, if plain, we must remember, too,

that it must be very *elementary*. We must be often laying again the foundation-stone; teaching faith in Christ again and again; as Luther says, repeating justification by faith every Sunday, because men are so apt to forget it. Oh! ye fine preachers who elaborate your learned essays, who work all the week long to addle your own brains, and then spend the Sunday in muddling your hearers, would that ye would remember these poor gleaners, who want none of your fine stuff, none of your glorious flights, none of your rounded periods; but who will be better far content if you will tell them that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and will point their eyes to Calvary and bid them look and live. We must let fall handfuls on purpose for the weak and ignorant. And then again, our preaching must be *evangelical*. Weeping eyes need Christ to dry them; tender hearts need Jesu's wounds to make them whole. A man who lives without temptation may enjoy a Sunday's sermon without Christ in it, but give me a man who is tempted in the week and I know he wants Christ; give me a man who has lost money in the week, or that has been subjected to ridicule for Christ's sake, and I know that you might as well offer him the husks that swine do eat as offer him anything but Christ crucified visibly set forth before his eyes. Oh! we must get back to this, all of us who are preachers; we must forget what we learned at college; we must leave behind what we pick up from learned books, and come out to tell to Ruth just that which she most wants to hear, that Boaz welcomes her to the field, and bids her glean till her hands are full.

But then, brethren, you will notice that these reapers were to let handfuls fall *on purpose for her*. Well, then, ye reapers in God's field, let your preaching be very *personal*. Oh! I love when I draw the bow not to do it at a venture, but to single out some troubled heart and speak to you all as though there were but one here; not pouring the oil over the wound, but coming up to the edge of the gaping sore to pour *in* the oil and wine. These poor Ruths will not dare to take the corn unless we put it right in their way. They are so fearful, so timorous, that though it seem to be scattered for everybody, they think it cannot be for them; but if it be *there*, put *there* so that they cannot mistake it, then they say—"Well, that is for me; ay, that is what *I* have felt; that is what *I* want;" and they cannot, unbelieving though they be, they cannot help stooping down and picking up the handful that is let fall *on purpose* for them. Then, if it be so, our preaching must always be very *affectionate*, for if we let fall a handful with a scowling face, our Ruth will go to the other end of the field rather than pick it up. Oh! brethren in Christ, it is after all our sympathy with our fellow-men which is the great engine the Holy Ghost uses in converting them. It is not merely telling out the truth which is the power. God, if he had willed it, might have made statues which could preach, and they could have preached as well as we do, and infinitely better if the Lord had poured the words out of their cold lips; but he made *men* preachers that men might feel for men, and that our words might come out from our hearts, and so go glowing into the hearts of the afflicted. Oh! let *us*, then, who are reapers for Christ, be very tender with poor Ruth, and often when we forget the strong and leave the mighty man to take care of himself,

let us go to the gate to pull in the fainting Mercy, and to invite Christiana and her little children to sit down and rest. So would I do this morning, and therefore I pass on to our third point.

III. As myself a reaper for Christ, I must try to follow the example of the reapers of Boaz, and let fall handfuls on purpose for the gleaner.

I am afraid I shall not be able to give you such handfuls as I would, but they shall come out of the right field. Oh! thou timid and troubled heart, let me drop before thee now *a handful of precious promises.* "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Doth not that suit thy case? A reed, helpless, insignificant, and weak; a bruised reed, out of which no music can come; weaker than weakness itself; a reed, and that reed bruised! He will not break thee; he who broke Rahab by his right hand will not break thee. Thou art like the smoking flax; no light, no warmth, come from thee; thou art on the contrary, like flax that smokes, giving forth a foul, offensive smell. But he will not quench thee; he will blow with his sweet breath of mercy, till he fans thee to a flame. Dost thou need another? "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." What soft words! Thy heart is tender and the Master knows it, and therefore he speaketh so gently to thee. Wilt thou not listen, and obey him, and come to him, come to him even now? Hear him yet again—"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Or wouldest thou hear Jesus Christ speak to thee again?—"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Or, again, "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Dost thou not remember ten thousand such passages as these? "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee; when thou goest through the fires thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Or this, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Or this, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." Or this, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." Or this, "The Spirit and the bride say Come, and let him that is athirst Come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." Or this, again, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye that have no money, come and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Oh! my Master's field is very rich; behold the handfuls. See, there they lie before thee, poor timid soul! Gather them up, make them thine own, for Jesus bids thee take them. Be not thou too bashful; but take them, feed on them, and go on in the strength of this meat all thy days.

Well, I have dropped a handful of promises; now let me try and scatter a *handful of doctrines.* But Ruth starts back, for she is afraid to glean in the wheat-fields of doctrine. Nay, but Ruth, here is the doctrine of election; come and glean that. Fear thee not, poor timid

soul, 'tis a sweet and blessed truth. Hear it—"God hath chosen the weak things of this world, and the things that are not hath God chosen to bring to nought the things that are." "I thank thee, O Father of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Doth not that suit thee, timid soul? Art not thou as a babe, as a weak thing, and as a foolish thing? Oh, there is a handful on purpose for thee, in the doctrine of electing love. Hear thou another, the doctrine of justification by faith;—not by works of righteousness which we have done he saveth us, but through Christ Jesus; we are saved through what Jesus hath done on our behalf. "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but hath everlasting life." What sayest thou? Doth not that suit thee? Thou hast no good works; canst thou not trust Christ and *his* good works on thy behalf. Is not this a handful on purpose for thee? "Yes, but I fear me," saith one, "that if I were saved I should yet fall away, for I am so weak." There is another handful for thee—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." Is not this a handful on purpose for thee? "I have made and I will bear, even I will carry; even unto hoar hairs I am he, and unto old age will I carry thee." What more dost thou want? I tell thee, Ruth, there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which, if it be rightly understood, will not yield handfuls on purpose *for thee*. Indeed, my Master's gospel, though it be a chariot in which a king may ride, is like an ambulance used on the field of battle, in which a man with broken limbs may ride comfortably too. Oh! it is soft riding when Christ carrieth in his arms, and he doth this for such as thou art. Broken in pieces all asunder, with thy thoughts like a case of knives cutting thy soul and conscience through and through, Christ has made his gospel to suit *thee*. The other day, when one of our brothers was sick of consumption, we sent him a water-bed to rest on, and the comfort it gave him was indeed delightful; but oh! Jesus Christ's bosom is something softer than that. Though thou be never so weak, though thou be like a sere leaf driven in the wind and broken of the tempest, thou shalt yet find perfect peace and quiet in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is a gospel *on purpose for thee*.

Once more, we have some handfuls to drop that we have gathered in another field; we have been to promise-field and to doctrine-field, *now let us go to the field of experience*. Dost thou not know, Ruth, that thy experience is no exception to the rule? There are thousands such as thou art; and I, too, who speak to thee this morning, that thou mayest know the truth of this matter, I tell thee that once upon a time I stood like thyself shivering at the gate, and I said in my soul, "His mercy is clean gone for ever; he will be mindful of his covenant no more." For years I cried for mercy but did not find it, and I wrote my name among the damned, and said I must perish, for God had shut up the bowels of his compassion. But he hath not despised the cry of his prisoner. I looked unto him and was lightened, and I am not ashamed

to confess that there is light nowhere but in him. "Oh," say you, "then your experience is something like mine!" Just so, it is; and so there is a handful on purpose *for you*. I know the devil tells you, you are lost in a by-road where Christ's mercy never travels; but it is a mistake; you are in the midst of the king's highway. I know he tells you, you have got to the ends of the earth; but my Lord puts it—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Oh, but you think you are the last man! Ah! but Christ loveth to take the last and make them first, while the first he often leaveth to be last. Yes, but you have written bitter things against yourself! Never mind what you have written; what a mercy it is Christ did not write them, and that, on the contrary, he has written sweet things of you, and hath said, "Return unto me, saith the Lord, for I am reconciled unto thee." Soul, my Master—would that he were here to speak for himself, for my poor words are so feeble compared with his—my Master woos thee this morning. Instead of offering thee a gleaning, he offers thee himself. Thou camest to be a gleaner; he would make thee his spouse. See, Boaz comes to thee. Wilt thou have him? The ring is in his hand; come, stretch out the finger of thy little faith, and let the deed be done. Say, "Unworthy though I be, I hope, my Lord, I am thine; no other would I have to serve, to love, to trust; Jesu, just as I am take thou me, and make me what thou wouldest have me to be." 'Tis done; the marriage is ratified, and by-and-bye, it shall be consummated before the eternal throne in thine everlasting bliss.

I have good reason for being earnest in trying to comfort this Ruth, because, though she is a stranger, she is a sister of mine. I am a stranger, too; we both come from the same land and the same howling wilderness. She is in trouble, and my soul hath known trouble too, the self-same trouble as hers, and I would fain bring her to the port of peace. Besides, she is to be my Master's wife, and I would be on good terms with the mistress of the house. It is ill for the reaper to have an enemy in the mistress; and since I know that this Ruth shall by-and-bye find Boaz to be her next of kin, I would fain do her a good service and bring her to her Master's house, if so my Lord would honour me.

IV. I close, then, my sermon of this morning, by stirring up timid and troubled ones to do what I know grace will make them do ere long. I say, then, to you who are thus troubled in your consciences, since the field is open to you, and we bid you glean; since Boaz himself commands us to let fall handfuls on purpose for you, do your duty, and be bold to believe to-day. You have been afraid to trust Christ hitherto; trust him now. Venture on him; 'tis a poor word to use, but do it. Though something tells you you have no right to trust Christ, do it, right or no right. Now, flat on your face before him, with no confidence but in what he hath done and in what he is doing still; be bold to believe in him at this moment, and you shall live. And having believed in him, do thou be industrious every time the Word is preached to pick up every ear of comfort in the sermon. Ruth must bend her back, though it be but one ear she gathers at a time. Think it worth while to hear a sermon in never such a crowd, if thou mayest get but one ear of comfort, for one ear is a great thing for one who deserves none; and but one word of mercy from the lips of Christ

should be accounted more precious than rubies to a soul that deserves to hear him say, "Depart ye cursed." And when thou hast gathered one grain, and another, seek a retentive memory to keep in thy hand what thou hast gathered, or else thou wilt be like a silly gleaner who stoops to glean one ear, and drops another at the same time. Carry home what of truth thou canst. Take notes in thy heart. And when thou hast gathered and hast thy hands full, take care to discriminate. Ruth, we are told, threshed her corn and left the straw behind, and took home the good wheat. Do thou the same. There is much straw in all our sermons, much that our Master would not have us say, for we are poor, poor creatures, and but fallible like yourselves, but do you leave the straw behind, and take home the good wheat; and do us this service—do not take home the straw and leave the wheat as some do. There are many foolish gleaners who, if there be one word of ours awry will tell it to our discredit, but our Master's words they will forget. And, lastly, while on your knees in prayer you are beating out the sermon by meditation, turn your eye to my Master; go you to him and say to him, "Lord, I am content to glean though I get but one ear of mercy; but oh! that I had thyself! Oh! that thou wouldest give me thyself! I have no beauty, but oh! thou dost not love us for *our* beauty, but for *thy* beauty which thou dost cast on us; Lord, look on me; all I can say is that if thou wilt save me I will praise thee on earth and I'll praise thee in heaven, and there shall not be one before the throne more grateful than I, because there shall be none who shall owe so much to thine unmerited, rich, free, sovereign grace."

Sinner, if you do that now, my Master will accept you. Trust him *now*, poor hearts, trust him now! Away, thou black devil of hell, away, away! Wherefore will thou molest these lambs? Ye timid and troubled consciences, hear not what your doubts and fears, and hell and the devil would say, but come now to my Master! His wounds invite you—his tearful eyes invite you—his open heart bids you come. Come and trust him, he cannot reject you if you trust him just as you are. God help you to do it, and you shall see sin forgiven, your foes trampled under your feet, and you yourselves shall meet the great Boaz at the marriage-supper, and to him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 17TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."—John xvi. 14.

WE always need the Spirit of God in our preaching; but I think we more especially require his divine direction and instruction when the subject is *himself:* for the Holy Spirit is so mysterious in his varied attributes and operations, that unless He himself shall reveal himself to us, and give us the words in which to speak of Him, we shall surely fail either to understand for ourselves, or to enlighten others. In *his* light we see light, but without him we grope like blind men in the dark.

Certain sins against the Holy Ghost continually exist in a degree in the Christian Church. *Unholiness of life* grieves the Holy Spirit. When Christian men walk not according to the gospel; when their conversation is not ordered according to the pattern of Christ, then the Holy Spirit who hath no fellowship with unholiness, withdraweth himself in a measure from the Church. *Discord,* too, strife among brethren, forgetfulness of the new commandment, that we love one another, grieveth the sacred Dove: for as his nature is peaceable, as his office is to be the peace-giver, so he tarrieth not where there is the din and noise of contending parties. So, also, when he perceiveth his saints to be diseased with *worldliness,* when we prefer the treasures of Egypt to the reproach of Christ, and seek rather the things which are seen, which are temporal, than the things which are not seen, which are eternal, then again is the Holy Ghost quenched, and departeth from our midst. Above all, *pride,* and that *murmuring, rebellion, unbelief, obstinacy,* and self-seeking which pride leads to—all this grieveth the Holy Ghost, for he dwelleth with those who are "humble and of a contrite spirit;" and where there is the voice of murmuring, where one man seeketh to lift himself above another, and all to exalt themselves above their despised Lord, the Holy Ghost hideth himself, and suffereth barrenness to take the place of plenty, and death to reign where once life triumphed. These are a few of the common and the constant infirmities of the Church, by which the Holy Ghost is much hindered in those marvellous manifestations which otherwise would be common and usual in the midst of our Israel.

But there are two faults of the Church which appear to me periodically to manifest themselves. The one is when men ascribe wrong

things to the Holy Ghost, and maketh him the author of human novelties and delusions. In seasons when the minds of good men were anxiously alive to spiritual operations, certain weak-headed or designing persons have grown fanatical, and being bewildered by their own confused feelings, and puffed up by their fleshly mind, have forsaken the true light which is in the Word, to follow after the will-o'-the-wisps of their own fancies, the ignis-fatuui of their own brains. Such vain-glorious fools aspiring to be leaders, masters of sects, will boldly tell to men of itching ears that fresh doctrines have been specially revealed to them. They prate much of what they call the inner light (which is often an inner darkness), which dim candle they exalt above the light of the word of God, and tell you that marvellous things have been taught to them in dreams and visions. Ah! this is a high and crying crime. What, will you lay at the door of the Holy Ghost a deed which God hath solemnly cursed? Do you not start back at such a thought? Is it not almost blasphemy to imagine it? And yet remember, he that adds a single word to the canon of inspiration is cursed. Give ear to the very words of the Lord our God, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." And do you think the Holy Ghost would do that which involves a curse upon man? If I venture to add to God's word, or to take from it, I do it with this as my penalty, that God shall blot my name out of the Book of Life and out of the holy city; and yet these base pretenders, who would lay their foolish notions at the door of God the Holy Ghost, will have it that he has taught them more than is in the Book, that he has removed that which God laid down as the grand land-mark, and added to the finished testimony of God. Let none of you have any sort of patience with men who talk thus. Deny their very first principle, tell them—whether it be the deceiver of Western America, or the false prophet of Arabia—tell them that they are all impostors, for they ascribe to the Holy Ghost that which is impossible for him to commit, a violation of the revealed will of God in which it is declared that the canon of inspiration is shut up once for all. A little of this evil I detect among godly people. I find that sometimes even gracious men think they have had revelations. Texts of Scripture are no doubt laid home by the Holy Ghost to the souls of men as much to-day as in Paul's time, and there can be no doubt whatever that the Spirit bringeth all things to our remembrance whatsoever Christ hath taught, and that he leadeth us into all truth; but when a man tells me that the Holy Ghost has revealed to him something that is not in the Bible, he lies! Is that a hard word? It doth but express the truth. The man may have dreamed his revelation, he may have fancied it, but the Holy Spirit goeth never beyond the written word. "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." And beyond what Christ hath spoken and what Christ hath taught, the Holy Spirit goeth in no sense and in no respect. You understand what Christ has taught through the Spirit's teaching; but anything beyond the teaching of Christ and his apostles must be not of God but of man.

This is a most important principle to be held fast by all godly people, for the day may come when false prophets shall arise, and delude the people, and by this shall we be able to discover them; if they claim ought beyond what Christ hath revealed, put them aside, for they be false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing. The Spirit only teacheth us that which Christ hath taught beforehand either by himself or by the inspired apostles. "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." Just now we are in little danger from the excesses of fevered brains, for, as a rule, our sin is in being far too cold and dead to spiritual influences. I fear me we are liable to another evil, and are apt to forget the person and work of the Comforter altogether. We fear some congregations might say, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." From many modern sermons would you know that there was a Holy Spirit? If it were not for the benediction or the doxology you might go in and out many churches and meeting-houses by the year together, and scarcely know that there was such a person as that blessed, blessed giver of all good, the Holy Ghost. Sometimes we hear a little about his influences, as if the Holy Spirit were not as truly a person as even Jesus Christ himself, who in flesh and blood trod this earth. Oh, dear friends, I fear the first danger, that of running wild with whimsies and fancies about inner lights and new revelations; but I equally dread this last, this putting the revelation above the revealer, this taking the book without the author, this preaching of the truth without the great truth-applyer, this going forth to work with the sword, forgetting that it is the sword of the Spirit, and only mighty as the Holy Ghost maketh it "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." May this Church ever continue to reverence the Holy Spirit without exaggerating his work! May we prize him, love him, and adore him, because he so wonderously glorifies our blessed Lord.

With this, by way of preface, I shall now come at once to our text, using it three ways—first, *as a test to try various things by;* secondly, *as a direction how to honour Jesus,* and thirdly, *as a stimulus, stirring us up to glorify Christ.*

I. First, then, we shall use our text AS A TEST.

There are a thousand things that claim to be of the Holy Ghost; how can we know whether they are or not? Here is a simple mode of discovering, "He shall glorify me."

1. Let us, first of all, apply this test to *ministries.* There are crowds of preachers and reverend divines now-a-days in the world; but all are not ministers of God who are so called. A true minister is a creation of the God of heaven. It is no more in the power of the Church than it is in the power of the bishops to make ministers. Independency is as weak as Episcopacy on this point. God alone ordains ministers; all that the Church can do is to recognise them. We cannot make them at our colleges; we cannot make them by the laying on of hands, nor even by the choice of the Church. God must make them; God must ordain them; it is only for the Church to perceive God's work and cheerfully to submit to his choice. Now, there are some ministries which clearly are not of the Holy Ghost, because they glorify ceremonies. We could take you into certain places of worship where the general strain

of the ministry is a glorification of baptism, the blessed Eucharist, confirmation, priesthood, and so on. There you hear much of the childish millinery with which they deck the altar, and much is said of those grotesque garments in which their priests disguise themselves. We could point to many places where the main object of teaching seems to be to exalt a rubric, to magnify a liturgy, to hold up a hierarchy, or to extol a ritual. Now all such ministries we may at once sweepingly and unerringly condemn. They are not of the Holy Ghost, for the Holy Spirit teacheth us not to magnify outward rites, but Christ; and that teaching is not of the Holy Ghost which doth not glorify the Lord Jesus.

Into other places we might take you where very clearly the object is the extolling of doctrine. From the first of January to the last of December the brother bitterly contends for the favourite corners of his faith. Doctrine, with certain friends, is everything, and their rigid orthodoxy is the one care of their life. Now, against a sound creed and the doctrines of grace we have not a word to say. God be thanked that we love these things as much as those who exalt them above measure; and are not a whit behind the chiefest of these champions in our zeal for orthodoxy; but still our Lord is, and must be, the leading theme of our ministry, and we must continue to exalt him rather than Calvinism, or any other system of theology. We are bold to say it, much as we love the Master's throne, we love the Master better still; and dearly as we love battling for the walls of his vineyard, yet the clusters of his Eshcol are sweeter to our taste. We love Christ better than creed, and we think we would rather magnify our Master than any set of truths, however important they may be.

There are certain doctrinal brethren, good enough in their way, but still you can evidently see that the doctrine of election is a thing that they contend more for than the doctrine of the redemption of Christ; or if it be redemption, it is rather the *speciality* of redemption than the divine sacrifice itself. I love to preach the distinguishing grace of God, but I am far from thinking that some four or five points comprise all the truths which God has revealed. Be it ours to preach the doctrines as Dr. Hawker preached them, with Christ as their sum and substance; "a full Christ for empty sinners," be this our theme. To a great extent it is true of a ministry that seeketh only to exalt doctrines, that it hath not the fulness of the Holy Ghost in it, for of the Holy Spirit it is written "He shall glorify *me*."

Another class of brethren are well known to those of us who have looked upon the Church of God at large, whose ministry tends mainly to magnify a certain experience—If you have felt thus and thus, and so and so, no words of praise can be too strong for you; but if you have been led in another way, in a different path, then depend on it, according to the judgment of these divines, you never knew vital godliness at all. They are as intimate with the secrets of heaven as the Pope himself, and are quite as infallible as he, in their small dominions. Some of these brethren have no doubt gone through a very deep and awful experience; they have lived so much in sin, and have been so untrue to their Lord, that it is little marvel if they have to walk in darkness and see no light. But these brethren hold up that

experience as a model, and tell us that unless we know all they have learned, we are not Christ's. Now, I say not a word against experimental preaching; I believe it to be the most soul-fattening preaching in the world, but it must be experience about Christ, it must be an experience that leads me oût of self to Jesus, and if any ministry be experimental, yet if it do not exalt Christ, I have cause to suspect whether the Holy Ghost is with it, for this standeth as an unchanging rule—"He shall glorify *me*."

And, dear brethren, once again, we are cursed with some few men—would God they were fewer—whose teaching constantly is, "morality:" if we will do this, and that, and the other, we shall be saved—the old law of Moses is toned down, and then held up as the road to heaven. Now, at once, ye may forsake the synagogues where such men are in the chief places; for if any man exalt the works of flesh, and not the finished work of Christ; if the doings, the willings, the prayings, the feelings of man, be put in the place of the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, his ministry is not of the Holy Ghost. And what might I say of many who produce on the Sabbath-day, their pretty little essays, their elaborate disquisitions, their high-sounding periods?—what shall I say of all these but that they are as "sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal," inasmuch as they forget Christ, the person of Christ—God and man; the work of Christ—his atonement and righteousness; the resurrection of Christ—the life and joy of the saints; the intercession of Christ—our hope and our strength; and the second advent of Christ, which is as the bright morning-star to every weary watcher in this world's darkness. That ministry, and that ministry only, is of the Holy Ghost which magnifies Christ Jesus.

And here, dear brethren in the ministry—and there are some such present—how bitterly may you and I lament much of our ministry because it hath not glorified Christ! When we shall lie stretched upon our dying beds, we shall look back with satisfaction to that poor stammering sermon in which we magnified the Master; we shall look with intense regret to that well-delivered oration in which we glorified a sect, or lifted up an ordinance at the expense of our Lord. Oh, what joy it shall be to remember that we did lift *him* up, that however feebly, yet we did extol *him;* that though sometimes utterance would not come as our heart would have it, yet we did point to his flowing wounds and say, "Behold the way to God." Oh! the sweet bliss of a Whitfield when he retires to his last couch, to feel that he did preach Jesus, whether it was at the market cross, or on the hill side, or in the Church, or in the barn; what a consolation to feel that he did cry faithfully, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid!'" Oh! the curse on the other hand, that shall rest on a man who, in his last moments, shall have to reflect—"I preached other men's sermons, and talked of anything but Christ; I lifted up anything but the Lord!" Oh! how shall the howlings of his eternal doom commence in his ear, how shall the judgments of God get hold upon him even before he passes to the dread tribunal of the Most High. We must, as preachers, come back more and more to this rule, to feel that if the Holy Ghost be in us he will make us glorify Christ.

2. Having thus tried ministries, let us now take the same test with

regard to *doctrine;* and very briefly here lay it down as a self-evident truth that any teaching, whatever authority it may claim, which does not glorify Christ, is most assuredly false; and on the other hand, I think we shall seldom be wrong if we believe that when a teaching lifts Christ up and puts many crowns upon his head, it must be a doctrine according to godliness.

Dear friends, Socinianism must be utterly abhorred of us, for it strikes at once at the Deity of our blessed Lord and Master. We cannot give to such persons even the name of Christians. Mahometans they may be—it were well if they would join with those men—they may be good men, they may be moral men, they may be excellent citizens, but Christians they cannot be, if they deny our Lord to be very God of very God, and worthy to be worshipped even as is the Father. I marvel much that sundry Dissenters should have fraternized with Arians and Socinians in attacking the Church of England, in the present sorrowfully mistaken onslaught called the Bicentenary, and I can only pray that the Lord may not visit them for this shameful confederacy with his enemies. In Arminianism, which is a mixture of truth and error, there is the doctrine of the saints falling from grace—a doctrine which is more dishonourable to Christ than I can tell you—which to my mind, seems to put its black and sooty finger right adown the escutcheon of my Lord and Master, setting him as a laughing-stock to the whole world, as one who begins to build and is not able to finish, there is a blot upon his power; he loves and yet he loves not to the end, there is a blot upon his faithfulness; he says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," and yet they do perish, according to that doctrine which is a stain upon his veracity. In fact, the doctrine of final falling, impugns the whole character of Christ so much, that it would render him unworthy of our faith. When they shall prove that one who was once in Christ hath fallen away and hath been lost, I know not Christ, for he hath violated his word. He can no more be "the truth," when he hath thus put his own promises into the background, and suffered his darlings to fall into the power of the dog. If there be anything in Scripture as plain as noon-day, it is the doctrine that "He that believeth in him *hath* everlasting life and shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation;" and if the child of God can be disinherited, if Christ can divorce his spouse, if the good shepherd shall lose his sheep; if the limbs of Christ's mystical body can be cut off, or can be allowed to rot, then I know not what Scripture teacheth, nor do I understand how Christ can be worthy of the believer's trust. That doctrine, I think, must be reprobated, because it staineth the honour and glory of Christ. Without alluding to others, let that suffice as an instance. Examine well all doctrines; look not at them with complacency because they are put in cunning language, or asserted in vigorous declamation; but if you perceive that any teaching dishonours Christ and maketh much of human ability, if it exalts man and derogates from the grace of God, it is false and dangerous; and if, on the other hand, it layeth man in the dust and lifteth up Christ as a Saviour, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of salvation, you may safely say that is the Holy Ghost's doctrine, for He shall glorify Christ.

3. Again, we may use our text as a means by which to try much of the *conviction* through which a sinner passes. In the first dawn of our spiritual life, a mighty tempest of spiritual influence sweeps over the heart. The Holy Ghost is active, and the prince of the power of the air is active too. There is more of God and more of devil in a new convert, than perhaps in any other stage of human existence; for just then Satan rageth with extraordinary fury to drag back the soul to destruction, and the Holy Ghost worketh in him mightily, with a power which only omnipotence can wield. How, in this confusion, can a man know what part of his conviction is of God, and what part of the devil? Young man, hearken to me, you have a thought in your head that you are too great a sinner to be saved. That is not of the Holy Ghost, clearly, because it detracts from the power of Christ as a Saviour; that cannot be of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. "Yes, sir, but I feel myself to be a great sinner, utterly lost and ruined." That *is* of the Holy Spirit, because it lays you low in order that the greatness of Christ's salvation may be the more apparent. "Oh, but," you say, "I am not fit to come to Christ." Surely this feeling is not of the Holy Ghost, but of the devil, for it does not glorify Christ. What, are you to make yourself *fit* to come to Christ? Why, that is making you a Christ; yes, it is making you an Antichrist, which is no work of heaven, but a foul design of hell. "But I heard old Mr. So-and-So say the other day, sir, that when he was converted, he seemed to be dragged by the hair of his head to the very depths of hell, and his soul was full of blasphemy, and his heart was in such an awful state that he cursed the day of his birth, because he thought he was shut out of the covenant, and was utterly lost beyond the reach of mercy." Very well, no doubt what he has told you was his veritable experience; but do you want to experience every piece of devilry that a good man has known? Because a good man trips and falls into the gutter, must you trip and fall there too? Because Jonah descends into the whale's belly, must we all dive into the sea? I tell you, soul, that much of what your friend felt was not of God, but of his own corrupt heart, and of the devil, and he knows it, and he will confess the same to you. Why, therefore, should you pant after that which is sinful and satanic? Why should you desire to drink the poison of asps, and snuff the fumes of Tophet? Nay, but if the Lord brings thee, this morning, to put thy soul just as it is into the hands of the Redeemer, honouring him by a childlike trust, thou hast an experience infinitely more precious than the howling of fiends, and the ravings of thy proud heart could ever yield thee. To be nothing, and to accept Christ as everything, is worked in us of the Holy Ghost; but all the rest, those horrible insinuations, that terrible hell-shaking, may be well dispensed with; good men have felt these, but they are not good things; they come from Satan, and are to be avoided and prayed against, but not to be sought after. I pray you, therefore, let the Holy Spirit lead you in his own way, and ask not to be led in a way of your own choice. Why long for darkness when the Master wills to let thee walk in the light? Into these balances, then, put all your convictions, and discover how far they are of God, and how far of Satan. That which glorifies Christ is of the Holy Ghost; all the rest is of flesh, or of hell,

4. Thus, also, we may test what is called *experience*. Very much of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. If any person should mount the platform and say, "I will tell you the experience of a man," and then inform us that he had been five times tried at the Old Bailey, you would say, "Well, *you* may have experienced that disgrace, but it is not fair to call it human experience." So, a Christian man may fall into great darkness, and into sin too; let us mournfully confess it. But then, if he shall set up his darkness and his sin as being Christian experience, we say, "No; we do not judge *you*, *you* may be a Christian and know all this, but we cannot allow *you* to judge *us*, and decide our spiritual state according to your peculiar method of feeling. I fear that many biographies have done as much mischief as service; because while no doubt they comfort many who fall into the same state, yet a sufficient discrimination is not made between the man stirred by the powers of evil, and the same man when filled with the Holy Ghost. Where we get to that which cometh from beneath we ought to write always in the spirit of our apostle who cannot describe himself without an agony. "Oh! wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." That which glorifies Christ is true Christian experience, and that which does aught but this, a Christian may experience, but it is not Christian experience.

5. Let us lift the scales of judgment once more. I think our text gives us an excellent test by which to *try ourselves*. My hearer, art thou saved or not, this morning? If thou be saved, the bent, the tenour, the bias of thy life is to glorify Christ. What sayest thou in looking back? Does the past glorify Christ? Can you say now with all your heart, "Yes, glory be to his name; when I think of the love that cleansed me from such sin; of the grace that broke a heart so hard as mine; of the faithfulness that has kept me to this day, I can only glorify Christ." And what about the present? "Oh," can you say, "when I think of what I now am by the grace of God, and what I should have been now if the grace had not prevented; when I look within and see so much blackness, I must magnify the grace that keeps me; and when I look without and see so many temptations, I must and will speak well of his dear name; I must glorify my Lord Jesus." And what dost thou say about the future? Wilt thou glorify him *then*? I think I see even the timid ones with their eyes a little brightening up when they say "Ay! if he will but once bring me across the river, if I ever get beyond gunshot of the devil, and behold the face of Christ in glory, I will sing loudest of all the crowd. I will magnify him with all my powers, for I shall owe more to him than any else before the throne; I will never cease to sing with all the blood-washed throng,

> "Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown him Lord of all."

Oh! if your heart is not so that Christ is all to you, and if your soul is not desiring this morning to honour him, him only, then indeed I fear me the Holy Ghost has had no dealing with your spirit, for where he has been at work, he must, he shall glorify Christ.

II. We are now to use our text as A DIRECTION. How are we to glorify Christ?

The text tells us that we must have the Holy Spirit. Let our text, then, be sanctified to our *humiliation*. Here are we saved, by the rich love of Christ, delivered from our sins, and made alive unto God, and yet we are such weak things that we cannot glorify Christ without the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. We may pant, and long, and pray that we may have helped to honour our Master, but we shall only dishonour him and disgrace his cause, unless the Holy Spirit hold us up and strengthen us. Dost thou hear that, Christian man? Thou hast ten talents, but those ten talents shall make thee ten times a worse defaulter to thy Master unless the Holy Ghost help thee. Thou hast eloquence thou hast wit, thou hast wealth; with none of these canst thou glorify Christ, unless the Holy Ghost be with thee; for "*He* shall glorify me." Man cannot, except as the Holy Ghost be with him. Bow your heads, then, O ye saints of God, and ascribe ye glory unto the Holy Spirit, but unto yourselves be shame and confusion of face. Let us employ this text as an excitement to *earnest prayer*. We as a Church, and I may speak freely for my own flock, we long to see Christ glorified. It is to this end we seek to train up our sons, young men in our much-loved college, that they may go forth as preachers of the Word. We have agencies by which we hope to do something in our generation for our Master, but what is everything we can do without the Holy Ghost? Let us, therefore, pray without ceasing. Oh, without prayer what are the Church's agencies, but the stretching out of a dead man's arm, or the lifting up of the lid of a blind man's eye? Only when the Holy Spirit comes, is there any life and force and power. Cry then mightily unto God, O ye who seek to glorify Christ, for without the Holy Spirit ye utterly fail. And here what a lesson our text reads us of *entire dependence* upon the Holy Spirit. Nothing can ye do ye ministers of God, nothing ye faithful watchmen of Jerusalem, nothing can ye do ye teachers of youth, nothing ye heralds of the cross in foreign fields, nothing ye ten thousands who are willing to give all your substance, your time, and your talents, absolutely nothing can ye accomplish until God the Holy Spirit comes. We are by the sea-side; there are a number of ships left high and dry by the ebb of the tide. A long tract of mud stretches out before us. What is to be done? Call the king's horses, bring the king's men, gather together the wise and the mighty; what can they all do? Nothing; their learning can only avail to prove most clearly that they can do nothing. But see the tide rolls in, wave after wave rises from the deep, and lo every ship floats, and all the mud and sand is covered with the fulness of the sea. So is it with the Churches, we all lie high and dry upon the beach, and there is nothing but the rock and mud of our own inability that is visible, and we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, till lo! the holy tide comes; the blessed spirit of revival, the Holy Ghost, is poured out, and now the heaviest Church is floating out to sea, and that which was most inactive begins to move! Oh! what can we not do if we have the Holy Spirit? What can we do if we have him not? See our utter and entire dependence upon him. When we, as a Church, first came out into broader light and more public notice, I bear my witness, we had an entire dependence upon the Holy Ghost. What prayers have I heard, what strivings and what groanings. We are reaping now the ripe fruits

of the early sowing. Lo, your minister, but a stripling from the country all untrained in academic lore, knowing nothing but just the doctrine of the cross, came forth before the multitudes to tell out simply the Word. How he felt his nothingness then, and how often he told you so! You cried, to God and the child, the lad was helped. What mighty deeds were done in the conversion of hundreds! And now we have a name, and there is a great temptation to rest upon our success, and for men to think there is something in the preacher, that he can gather the crowd, can preach the Word, and it is sure to be blessed when he preaches it. Brethren, again I say we are nothing, we are less than nothing. Your minister a fool, and nought beyond, except the Holy Ghost be with him; able to do nothing except mischief; nothing that shall be profitable to you, or make any heart glad but the heart of the evil one, unless the Holy Ghost be with us still. Joyously would I receive again the jeer, the sneer, the constant slander that was heaped upon my devoted head, if I might have back again your entire dependence upon the Holy Ghost. Oh, members of this Church, you who have been quickened under our word, let not your faith stand in the wisdom of man, but still in the demonstration of the Spirit; and let us one and all feel that we are still as weak as water, and as vain as the whistling wind, unless he that was first with us be with us still. "He shall glorify me." The Holy Ghost shall do it. None can do it if he be absent.

I know I am addressing some this morning who have seen the goings forth of the Holy One of Israel. In fact we as a Church have had to rejoice these nearly nine years in a blessed revival, but how diligent should we be while we have that revival, in order that we may retain it! All the farmers in England cannot make it leave off raining, but when it does leave off, and the sun shines, I know what they can do—get their wheat in as quick as they can. All the sailors on the ocean cannot make a capful of wind; when the sail flaps to and fro they cannot make it swell out as in the gale, but what can they do when the wind does blow? They can crowd on every yard of canvas. So all the Christains in the world cannot make the Holy Spirit work. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth;" but what we can do is this, when we have the Holy Spirit, we can use him; when He is with us we can work. We must make hay while the sun shines; we must grind while the wind blows, we must be active and diligent for God when the visitation of the Holy Spirit is with us. The revival has to a great extent ceased in many places. I fear me it is because they did not diligently use its influence. In Ireland how much of revival there was, but the Holy Spirit withdrew necessarily because it was held up as a curiosity. Every newspaper reeked with the news of the revival; people went from England to see it; it could not last then. God never does His great works to be stared at, to be held up as curiosities. The thing was ruined the moment men began curiously to talk of it and spread abroad the news thereof as of a phenomenon worthy of philosophical investigation. These good things should never be made a subject of "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts;" while the good work goes on we should be so hard at work for the Master, that we have

not time to put into every penny newspaper the tale of what God is doing. Let us then be up while the Master is with us and doing His work, doing it in the Spirit's own way, seeking to glorify Jesus, and seeking to retain the Spirit in our midst.

III. And now, lastly, I am to take my text by way of A STIMULUS. Does the Holy Ghost glorify Christ? Ah, then, how should we aim to do it! Let us make, then, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us make this the one object of our life, to glorify Christ. You have been a man in a large way of business Could you say while you were doing business so largely that your object was to honour Christ in it? Well you have come down in the world; you have a smaller shop now. Yes, but suppose you can glorify God more. Then you are in a better position than you used to be. I have seen many a man who prospered in his soul and honoured his Master much, who has made a wrong step, and has injured his usefulness and happiness; wanting to get more business, he has launched into wide speculations, and has had less time for serving his Lord, and has thus really been in a worse position, for spirituals were under a decay. You may have seen in the newspapers an instance of what sometimes comes through getting wealthy. A man and his wife were prospering in a little way of business, as hard-working people, near Birmingham. A friend died and left the wife some £1,300, no great sum, but quite enough to ruin a man. They at once took a public-house, and you will remember that he now lies in prison on a charge of murdering his wife. Little marvel that when, tempted by what little they had to seek after more they entered upon an ill occupation in order to increase their wealth; that evil trade soon led to vicious habits and to death. Now I have seen believers mournfully impoverish their souls by seeking after carnal wealth instead of seeking Christ; but let a man's only object be to glorify Christ, and he will feel very little concern where providence places him, so long as he may still promote his one object, and put crowns on the Redeemer's head.

This brings me to say, brethren, while we make this our aim, let us take every opportunity of glorifying Christ. We throw thousands of opportunities away. Where we might do good we neglect it. I chide my own self here very bitterly and very often, but I fear me I might chide many of you too. You had an opportunity yesterday, but you lost it; you might have spoken for Christ but you did not. No one can tell the good you might have done, but you did not do it. You were backward. Oh! as the Holy Ghost glorifies Christ everywhere, so do you! I pray you do this always, not merely at particular times, but make your whole life a glorifying of Christ. As I sat on an omnibus yesterday, I heard a man saying behind me, how greatly he admired the continental way of keeping Sundays—going to the church in the morning, and going to the theatre at night. "Don't you see," he said, "it is irrational to think that the Almighty expects us to spend the whole day in praying. There is no man living who can pray for six hours together, let alone twelve." That was just putting in broad language what most ungodly people feel, but then I wonder what they would make of the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Pray without ceasing." Here was a man who thought that nobody could pray for six hours together,

while the saints of God are to continue always in prayer. No man comes up to the stature of the Christian, or such a man as he should be, unless he cannot only pray for six hours together, but his whole life long. It was said of good old Rowland Hill, that people did not so much notice his particular times of retirement, for he was a man who was always praying, wherever he might be. You would often find him alone talking to himself, and ever in company his heart would be going away to the object of his best love, he would still be in communion with Christ. Be ye always glorifying Christ, Christians, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Whether ye work at a lapstone, or drive a plough, or lay the stones in a building; serve the Master in all these things; whether ye are diligent with the pen, or whether ye buy and sell, or plough the sea, do all even to your eating or your drinking in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so like the Holy Spirit let it be said of you, "He shall glorify me."

We conclude by endeavouring to magnify our Master ourselves. I want to say just two or three things to glorify him, and they shall be just these. I shall say this to the poor troubled doubting sinner, "Sinner, my Master is able to save you?" "Oh, but I am the biggest sinner out of hell." Yes, he is the greatest of all Saviours. "Yes, but I have gone over head and ears in iniquity." Yes, but he was baptised also in his agonies that he might save you. "Oh, but he *cannot* save me!" Ay! but he can; and if I am now addressing the scum of the earth, one of the devil's sweepings, one who is hardly fit for decent company, my Master is able to save you. Unto the uttermost he saveth, and your sin, though black, he can cleanse, and make you whiter than snow.

I would say something else to glorify *him*. He is willing to save you; his generous heart desireth you. Your perishing will not make him glad, but he will weep over you as he did over Jerusalem; but your being saved will give him to see of the travail of his soul. "Do you know who you are speaking to, sir?" No I don't, but my Master does; for now he fixes his poor tearful eyes on thee. Where is the sinner? Behind that pillar is he, or in yonder corner? The Master looketh at him, and he saith, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." What, are ye so far away? How loudly doth he call you, "Come, sinner, repent and come." Art thou willing to come? Lo! he meets thee, in the road he meets thee; embracing thee, he falls upon thy neck to kiss thee. He saith, even this morning he saith it, "Take off his rags and clothe him in fine apparel; wash him and make him clean, for I have put away his sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud his iniquities." That which glorifies Christ the most of all is the preaching of the Gospel to sinners, and therefore have I glorified him now, and would do so as long as I live. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned. God give us to glorify Christ by trusting in Him! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LOADED WAGGON.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."—
Amos ii. 13.

THE other Sabbath morning we went into the corn-fields to glean with Boaz and Ruth; and I trust that then many of the timid and faint-hearted were encouraged to partake of the handfuls which are let fall on purpose for them by the order of our generous Lord. We go, to-day, to the gate of the harvest-field with another object—to see the waggon piled up aloft with many sheaves, come creaking forth, making ruts as the toiling horses drag it from the field; we come with gratitude to God, thanking him for the harvest, blessing him for so much of favourable weather, and praying him to continue the same till the last shock of corn shall be brought in, and the husbandmen everywhere shall shout the "Harvest Home."

What a picture is a waggon loaded with corn of you and of me, as loaded with God's mercies! From our cradle up till now, every day has added a sheaf. What more could he do for us than he has done? He hath daily loaded us with benefits. Despite the sad affliction in the North, we are nationally a favoured people. Both in providence and in gracious privilege, he has blessed us above all people that be upon the face of the earth. While other countries have been crushed by tyrants, ravaged by war, or left in the thick darkness of superstition, we are free—we are blessed with the light of heaven—we have the gospel in our streets, the Bible in our houses, and the Sabbath as our choicest heritage. O England! thou art like a wain creaking under the mercies of God. Men and brethren! we are each of us like the cart that is pressed down because it is full of sheaves; for the innumerable mercies of God are piled upon us high as the mountains, nor can our memory recount the tokens of the tenderness and lovingkindness of the Most High. Let us adore his goodness, and yield him our cheerful gratitude.

Alas!—and how many times shall I repeat that pathetic interjection—alas! alas! alas! that such a metaphor should be capable of another reading; that while God loadeth us with mercy, we should load him with sin; while he continually heapeth on sheaf after sheaf of favour,

we also add iniquity unto iniquity, till the weight of our sin becometh intolerable to the Most High, and he crieth out by reason of the burden, saying, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."

Our text begins with a "*Behold!*" and well it may. "Beholds" are put in the Bible as sometimes a hand is put in the margin of old books, to indicate to the reader something worthy of notice; or, again, "Beholds" are put in the Scriptures as signs are put out from houses of business to attract attention. There is something new, something important, something deeply impressive and worthy of attention, wherever we see a "Behold" in sacred Scripture. I see this "Behold!" standing as it were, like a maiden upon the steps of the house of wisdom, crying, "Turn in hither, O ye that are wise, and listen to the voice of God while he speaketh to you." Let us open our eyes that we may see, let us fix both our eyes intently that we may "behold," and may God make a way through our eyes and ears to our heart, that deep repentance and self-abhorrence may take hold upon us, because of our evil conduct towards our gracious God.

Now, it is to be understood, dear friends, before we proceed farther, that our text is but a figure, since God is not to be oppressed by man; all the sin that man can commit can never disturb the serenity of his perfections, nor cause so much as a wave upon the sea of his everlasting calm. He doth but speak to us after the manner of man, and bring down the sublimities and mysteries of heaven to the feebleness and ignorance of earth. He talketh to us as a great father may talk to his little child, and he uses images which are rather adapted to human frailty than to divine infinity. Just, then, as a cart has the axles bent, and—to use an old Saxon word—as the wheels "screak" under the excessive load, so the Lord says that under the load of human guilt he is pressed down, until he crieth out, because he can bear no longer the iniquity of those that offend against him. We shall now turn to the first point, this morning. O that the Holy Ghost may make it pointed to our consciences.

I. The first and most apparent truth in the text is, that SIN IS VERY GRIEVOUS AND BURDENSOME TO GOD.

Be astonished, O heavens, and be amazed, O earth, that God should speak of being pressed and weighed down! I do not read anywhere so much as half a suggestion that the whole burden of *creation* is any weight to the Most High. "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." "He weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in balances." Neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor all the ponderous orbs which his omnipotence has created, cost him any labour whatever in their sustenance. The heathens might picture Atlas as stooping beneath the tremendous load of the world; but the eternal God, who beareth up the pillars of the universe, "fainteth not, neither is he weary." Nor do I find even the most distant approach to a suggestion, that *providence* fatigues its Lord. He watches both by night and day; his power goeth forth every moment. 'Tis he who bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season and guideth Arcturus with his sons. He beareth up the foundations of the earth! and holdeth the corner stone thereof. He

causeth the dayspring to know its place, and setteth a bound to darkness and the shadow of death. All things are supported by the power of his hand, and there is nothing without him. If he withdrew his might, back to annihilation must all things go. Just as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is lost for ever, so would the universe depart if the eternal God did not daily sustain it. Nor has this incessant working diminished his strength, nor is there any failing or thought of failing. He doeth all things, and when they are done they are as nothing in his sight. But strange, oh, passing strange, marvellous, miraculous among miracles, *sin* burdens God, though the world cannot; and iniquity presses the Most High, though the whole tremendous load of providence is as the small dust of the balance. Ah, ye careless men, sons of Adam, ye think sin a trifle; and as for you, ye sons of Belial, ye count it sport, and say, "He regardeth not; he seeth not; how doth God know? and if he knoweth, he careth not for our sins." Learn ye from the Book of God, that so far is this from being the truth, that your sins are a grief to him, a burden and a load to him, till, like a cart that is pressed down with sheaves, so is he pressed down with human guilt.

I think this will be very clear if we meditate for a moment upon what sin is, and what sin does. *Sin is the great despoiler of all God's works.* It was sin that turned an archangel into an arch-fiend, and angels of light into spirits of evil. It was sin that looked on Eden and withered every leaf in its garden, and blasted all its flowers. Ere sin had come, the Creator said of the new-made earth, "It is very good;" but when sin had entered, it grieved God at his very heart that he had made such a creature as man. Nothing can despoil the beauty in which God delighteth so much as sin, for sin mars his image, and erases his superscription.

Moreover, *sin makes God's creatures unhappy*, and shall he not, therefore, abhor it? God never designed that any creature that he made should be miserable. He made the creatures on purpose that they should be glad; he gave the birds their song, the flowers their perfume, the air its balm; he gave to nature the smiling sun, and even to night its coronet of stars, for he intended that smiles should be his perpetual worship, and that joy should be the atmosphere which his creatures breathed; but sin has made God's favourite creature a wretch, brought down his most glorious offspring, made in his own image, to become naked, and poor, and miserable, and lost; and therefore, God hateth sin, and is pressed down under it, because it maketh the objects of his love unhappy at their heart. All the unhappiness that we have this morning, comes from sin directly or indirectly. Iniquity is the mother of every human pang. Oh, how well may God hate it when he sees his own dearly beloved children made to wear furrows on their brow and tears in their eyes, because of this vile, this abominable thing called sin.

Moreover, remember, beloved, that *sin attacks God in all his attributes*, assails him on his throne, and stabs at his existence. What is sin, sinner? Is it not an insult to God's *wisdom?* God biddeth thee do his will; when thou doest the contrary it is because thou dost as much as

say, "I know best what is good for me." You do in effect declare that infinite wisdom is in error, and that you, the creature of a day, can judge better than your God which shall be the path of happiness for you. Sin impugns his *goodness;* for by sin you actually declare that God has denied you that which would make you happy, which is not the part of a good, tender, and loving Father. A generous God denies nothing to his creatures but that which is harmful; but inasmuch as you think sin to be pleasant and profitable, you cast a slur upon the benevolence and lovingkindness of God; and when he is such a God, so full of tenderness that his very name is "Love," this is no slight burden to his holy soul, to feel when he perceiveth that you think you could do better for yourself than he is willing to do, and that he has cruelly robbed you of pleasure and denied you that which would be for your good. Sin cuts at the Lord's wisdom with one hand, and at his goodness with the other.

And see, sin also abuses the *mercy* of God. When you, as many of you have done, sin with the higher hand because of his longsuffering towards you;—when, because you have no sickness, no losses, no crosses, therefore you spend your time in revelry and obstinate rebellion—what is this but taking the mercy which was meant for your good and turning it into mischief? It is no small grief to the loving father to see his substance spent with harlots in riotous living; I tell you it is no slight thing to the father of the prodigal to see him fain to fill his belly with the husks the swine do eat. This touches him at the very quick; he cannot endure it, that his children should be thus degraded as to turn even the mercy which would woo them to repentance into a ground why they should sin the more against him. Besides, let me remind the careless and impenitent this morning, that every sin is a defiance of divine *power.* In effect it is lifting your puny fists against the majesty of heaven, and defying God to destroy you. Every time you sin, you know that sin will lead to your soul's destruction, if then you beard the omniscient One even to his face, and while under the hand that can crush you, yet dare to revolt and to transgress, you do as much as dare and defy the Lord to prove whether he can maintain his law or no. Is this a slight thing, that a worm, the creature of a day, should defy the God of ages, the God that filleth and upholdeth all things by the word of his power? Well may he be weary, when he hath to bear with such provocations and insults as these! Mention what attribute you will, and sin has blotted it; speak of God in any relationship you choose, and sin has cast a slur upon him. It is evil, only evil, and that continually, in every view of it it must be offensive to the Most High. Sinner, dost thou know that every act of disobedience to God's law is virtually an act of *high treason?* What dost thou do but seek to be God thyself, thine own master, thine own lord. Every time thou swervest from his will it is to put thy will into its place; it is to make thyself a God, and to undeify the Most High. And is this a little offence, to snatch from his brow the crown, and from his hand the sceptre? I tell thee it is such an act that heaven itself could not stand unless it were resented; and if this crime were suffered to go unpunished, the wheels of heaven's commonwealth would be taken from

their axles, and the whole frame of nature would be unhinged. Such a treason against God shall certainly be punished.

And to crown all, *sin is an onslaught upon God himself*, for every sinner is an atheist at heart. Let his religious profession be what it may, he hath said in heart, "No God." He wishes that there were no law and no supreme ruler. He desires that God might be forgotten. God is not in all his thoughts. Is this a trifle? To be a deicide! To slay God! To desire to put him out of his own world! For the creature to declare war against the God that made him, and to wish that God might cease to be—is this a thing to be winked at? Can the Most High hear it and not be pressed down beneath its weight? Ah, I pray you do not think that I would make a needless outcry against sin and disobedience. It is not in the power of human imagination to exaggerate the evil of sin, nor will it ever be possible for mortal lips, though they should be touched like those of Esaias, with a live coal from off the altar, to thunder out the ten-thousandth part of the enormity of the least sin against God. Think, dear friends! We are his creatures, and yet we will not do his will. We are fed by him, the breath in our nostrils he gives to us, and yet we spend that breath in murmuring and in rebellion.

Once more, we are always *in the sight of our omniscient God*, and yet the presence of God is not enough to compel us to obedience. Surely, if a man should insult law in the very presence of the lawgiver—if the king were insulted to his face, that were not to be borne with; but this is your case and mine. We must confess, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." And we must remember that we are doing all this though meanwhile we know what we are doing. We are not sinning like the Hottentot; we are not pulling God's law to pieces like some blind New Zealander; we, in England, sin against extraordinary light and sevenfold knowledge; and is this a light thing? Can you expect that God shall wink at us and pass by such offences as these? Oh that these lips had language, that this heart could burn for once! for if I could declare the horrible infamy of sin it would make the blood chill in even a haughty Pharaoh's veins, and proud Nebuchadnezzar might bow his head in fear. It is a great thing indeed to have rebelled against the Most High. God have mercy upon his servants and forgive them. This is our first point, but *I* cannot teach you it, God can teach it by his Spirit. O that the Holy Ghost may make you feel that sin is exceeding sinful, because it is grievous and burdensome to God.

II. Secondly, SOME SINS ARE MORE ESPECIALLY GRIEVOUS TO GOD. The connection of our text will help you to see the force of this observation.

There is no such thing as a little sin, but still there are degrees of guilt, and it were folly to say that a sinful thought hath in it the same extent of evil as a sinful act. A filthy imagination is sinful—wholly sinful and greatly sinful, but still the act has attained a higher degree of provocation. Now, there are sins that especially provoke God. In the connection of the text we read that *licentiousness* does this. The people seem, from the 7th verse, to have gone to a very high degree of

fornication and lecherousness. This sin is not uncommon in our day; let our midnight streets and our divorce courts be the witness. Perhaps the saddest proof that society is far from pure is found in the fact that seducers and fornicators, if they be but gentlemen, may enter respectable society. Brand the miscreants, I say. If the woman be shut out as a harlot, what shall be done unto the lustful maker and cherisher of harlots? If hell burns hotter at one time than another it is for those who make what should have been a temple of the Holy Ghost, into an instrument of rebellion against both man and God.

Oppression, too, according to the text, is another great sin. The prophet speaks of selling the poor for a pair of shoes; and there are such who would grind the widow and the orphan to the last extreme, and make their labourers toil for nought. How many business men we have, who never knew what "bowels of mercy" were. Men form themselves into societies, and then exact an outrageous usury upon loans from the unhappy men who fall into their hands. Cunning legal quibbles, and crafty evasions of just debts, often amount to heavy oppression, and are sure to bring down the anger of the Most High.

Then again, it seems that *idolatry* and *blasphemy* are most certainly offensive to him, and have a high degree of heinousness. He says that they drank the wine of false gods; so if any man set up his belly as his god, or his gold, or his wealth, and live to these instead of living to the Most High, he hath offended by idolatry.

Specially is *blasphemy* a God-provoking sin. For blasphemy there is no excuse. As George Herbert says, "Lust and wine plead a pleasure;" there is gain to be pleaded for avarice, "but the cheap swearer from his open sluice lets his soul run for nought." There is nothing gained by it; there can be no pleasure in cursing, blasting one's limbs and damning one's soul; this must be offending for offending's sake, and hence this is a high and crying sin, which God doth pardon, which he is willing to pardon now, but which nevertheless weigheth upon his heart, and he cannot suffer it to go unpunished unless it be repented of. Some sins make the Lord very weary of man. Now, I do not know who you are, many of you this morning, but I have no doubt there are some among you to whom this word may be a personal accusation. Do I address the lecherous, or the oppressive, or the swearer? Do I address the profane? Ah, soul, what a mercy God hath borne with thee so long; the time will come, however, when he will say "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries," and how easily will he cast you off, and appoint you an awful destruction.

Again, whilst some sins are thus grievous to God for their peculiar heinousness, many men are especially obnoxious to God because of the *length* of their sin. That grey-headed man, how many times has he provoked the Most High? Why, those who are but lads have cause to count their years and apply their hearts unto wisdom because of the length of time they have lived in rebellion; but what shall I say of you that have been half a century in open war against God—and some of you sixty, seventy, what if I said near upon eighty years? Ah, you have had eighty years of mercies, and eighty years of forgetfulness; eighty years of bounty, and eighty years of ingratitude and insult! O God, well mayest thou be wearied by the length and number of man's sins.

Furthermore, God taketh special note and feeleth an especial weariness of sin that is mixed with *obstinacy*. Oh, how obstinate some men are! They *will* be damned; there is no helping them; they seem as if they would leap the Alps to reach perdition, and swim through seas of fire that they may destroy their own souls. I might tell you cases of men that have been sore sick of fever, ague, and cholera; they have recovered from all, and have only recovered their health to return to their wallowing in the mire. Some of them have had such troubles in business, thick and threefold. They were once in respectable circumstances, but they spent their living riotously, and they became poor; they still struggle on in sin; they are growing poorer still; most of their clothes have gone to the pawn shop; but they will not turn from the gin shop and the haunt of vice. Another child is dead! Ah, has that man yonder a dead child at home? and the wife is sick, and nothing but starvation looks the family in the face; but they have gone on still with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This is obstinacy, indeed. Sinner! God will let thee have thine own way one of these days, and that way will be thine everlasting ruin. But God is weary of all here who have thus set themselves to do mischief, and who against warnings, and invitations, and entreaties, and light, and knowledge, have determined to go on in sin.

The context seems to tell us that *ingratitude* is intensely burdensome to God. He tells the people how he brought them up out of Egypt; how he cast out the Amorites; how he raised up their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites; and yet they rebelled against him! Oh, dear friends, this was one of the things that pricked my heart when I first came to God as a guilty sinner, not so much the peculiar heinousness of my outward life, as the peculiar mercies that I had enjoyed. How many of us have been detestably ungrateful! What a life has our life been! Oh, how generous God has been! Why, there are some of us who never had a want. All our wants have been supplied. God has never cast us into poverty, nor left us to infamy, nor given us up to evil example, but he has kept us moral, and made us love his house even when we did not love him, and all this he has done year after year: what poor returns have we made! To you, his people, what joy he has given, what deliverances, what love, what comfort, what bliss—and yet after all this, to think that we should sin to his very face! Oh! well may he be as a cart that is pressed down, that is full of sheaves. O my hearers, I know I address some to whom this may come home very pointedly. What, when you were nearly drowned, were you snatched from the jaws of death? What, were you rescued from sickness? What, were you blessed with that godly mother, and did that companion plead with you? Have you a tender conscience? Do you feel that you cannot sin as others do, for something checks you? All this is God's love; but if you will still rebel against him, despite all this, well may he arise in his wrath, and shake himself in his hot displeasure. He will not always strive with man. Justice shall soon have its day.

Let me observe, before I leave this point, that it seems from our text, that the Lord is so pressed, that he even crieth out. Just as the cart when laden with the sheaves, groaneth under the weight, so the Lord crieth out under the load of sin. Have you never heard those accents?

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Hear again: "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Better still, hear it from the lip of Christ, softened down to our own ears—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Sinner, God is cut to the heart by thy sin; thy Creator grieves over that which thou laughest at; thy Creator crieth out in his Spirit concerning that which thou thinkest to be a trifle. O do not this abominable thing which I hate! For God's sake do it not! We often say "for God's sake," without knowing what we mean, but here, see what it means—for the sake of God—that ye grieve not your Creator—that ye cause not the Eternal One himself to cry out against you. Cease ye, cease ye, "from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." I now leave those two points to pass on very briefly to the next.

III. While it is true that sin is grievous to the Lord, it magnifies his mercy when we see that HE BEARS THE LOAD. As the cart is not said to break, but is pressed only, so is he pressed, and yet he bears. That hymn we sung just before the sermon has more in it than hard hearts will feel.

"Lord, and am I yet alive,
Not in torments, not in hell?
Still doth thy good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell?
Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell."

If you and I were in God's place, should we have borne it? Nay, within a week we should have burned the universe with fire, or trodden it to powder beneath our feet. If God were like modern lawgivers—and here I find no fault with them, for the law of a commonwealth must be unyielding—but if the law of heaven were as swift to punish as the law of man, where were we? I do not find you rising up to plead for the man who murdered his children, and from some fancied injury shot his fellow-man. We seem to say by a unanimous verdict, "The wretch is guilty, let him be punished." What a universal howl has been going up this week against an offender who once stood fair in the midst of us, but who turned aside long ago unto iniquity. What man pleads for him? Who stands up, and says, "Let William Roupell go unpunished?" Yet, here is God, and here are we whose offences are ten times more heinous against God than any man's offences can be against man, and yet he spareth us. Remember he hath all the while full power to punish. He hath but to wish and it is done—to lift his finger and we

are crushed before him. How many servants wait around him ready to do his bidding! As the Roman consul went out, attended by his lictors carrying the axe, so God is ever attended by his executioners, who are ready to fulfil his sentence. A stone, a tile from the roof of the house, a thunderbolt, a puff of wind, a grain of dust, a broken blood-vessel, and it is over, and you are dead, and in the hands of an angry God. Indeed, the Lord has to hold in the myrmidon of his wrath, and restrain the servants of his anger, for the heavens cry, "Why should we cover that wretch's head?" Earth asks, "Why should I yield a harvest to the sinner's plough?" The lightnings thunder, and say, "Let us smite the rebel," and the seas roar upon the sinner, desiring him as their prey. There is no greater proof of the omnipotence of God, than his longsuffering; for it shows the greatest possible power for God to be able to control himself, to be able to keep in an anger which naturally must boil, and restrain a fury which else must burn. Sinner, yet he bears with thee. The angels have been astonished at it; they thought he would strike; but yet he bears with you. Have you ever seen a patient man insulted? He has been met in the street by a villain, who insults him before a mob of boys. He bears it. The fellow spits in his face. He bears it still. Now he strikes him. He endures it quietly. "Give him in charge," says one. "No," says he, "I forgive him all." The fellow knocks him down, and rolls him in the kennel, but he bears it still; yes, and when he rises all covered with mire, he says, "If there be anything that I can do to befriend you, I will do it now." Just at that moment the wretch is arrested by a sheriff's officer for debt; the man who has been insulted takes out his purse and pays the debt, and says, "Now you may go free." See, the wretch spits in his face after that! Now you say "Let him feel what you can do; let the law have its way with him." Is there any room for patience now? So would it have been with man; it has not been so with God. We have done much worse than this, and he has acted much more nobly, and still, I say, he beareth it all. Though like the cart he is pressed under the load of sheaves, yet like the cart the axle does not break. He bears the load. He bears with impenitent sinners still.

IV. And this brings me now to pass over to the fourth head, on which I would have your deepest attention. Many here present, I fear me, have never repented of sin. You have never seen it in the light of grieving God, or else methinks you would not wish to grieve Him. But, perhaps some of you feel how evil a thing rebellion is, but you want to know how you can get rid of it. This is our fourth head. Not only doth God still bear with sin, but GOD, IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON, DID BEAR AND TAKE AWAY SIN.

These words might have deep meaning if uttered by the lips of Jesus,

"I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Here stood the great problem. God must punish sin, and yet he would have mercy. How could it be? Lo! Jesus comes to be the substitute for all who trust him. See how they pile on him the sheaves of human sin! There are MY sheaves of sin—

> "My soul looks back to see,
> The burden thou didst bear,
> When hanging on the cursed tree,
> And hopes her guilt was there."

Here are your sheaves, my hearer—the sheaves of all his chosen, the sins of all who shall believe in him! "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Yea, the Scripture hath it, "He is the propitiation for our sin, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." There they lie, heaps on heaps, till he is pressed down like the wain that groaneth as it moves along. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." See him, he did "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." They sold him for thirty pieces of silver, a goodly price did they value him at withal. He is taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? Herod mocks him and makes nothing of him. Pilate jeers him. They have smitten the Prince of Judah upon the cheek. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." They have tied him to the pillar; they are beating him with rods, not this time forty stripes *save one*, there is no "save one" with him, for "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." See him, like a cart pressed down with sheaves he goeth through the streets of Jerusalem. Well may ye weep, ye daughters of Jerusalem, though he bids ye dry your tears; they hoot him as he walks along bowed beneath the load of his own cross which was the emblem of your sin and mine. They have brought him to Golgotha. They throw him on his back, they stretch out his hands and his feet. The accursed iron penetrates the tenderest part of his body, where most the nerves do congregate. They lift up the cross. O bleeding Saviour, thy time of woe is come! They dash it into the socket with rough hands, the nails are tearing through his hands and feet. He hangeth in extremity, for God hath forsaken him; his enemies persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him. They mock his nakedness; they point at his agonies. They look and stare upon him with ribald jests; they insult his griefs, and make puns upon his prayers. He is now indeed a worm and no man, crushed till you can think scarcely that there is divinity within. The fever gets hold upon him. His tongue

is dried up like a potsherd, and he cries, "I thirst!" Vinegar is all they yield him; the sun refuses to shine, and the thick midnight darkness of that awful mid-day, is a fitting emblem of the tenfold midnight of his soul. Out of that thick horror he crieth "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, indeed, was he pressed down! Oh! there was never sorrow like unto his sorrow. All human griefs found a reservoir in his heart, and all the punishment of human guilt spent itself upon his body and his soul. Oh! shall sin ever be a trifle to us? Shall I ever laugh at that which made him groan? Shall I toy and dally with that which stabbed him to the heart? Sinner, wilt thou not give up thy sins for the sake of him who suffered for sin? Oh, sayest thou, yes, if I could believe that he suffered for my sake? Wilt thou trust thy soul in his hands this morning? Dost thou do so? Then he died *for thee* and took *thy* guilt, and carried all *thy* sorrows, and thou mayest go free, for God is satisfied, and thou art absolved. Christ was burdened that thou mightest be lightened; he was pressed with thy sheaves that thou mightest find deliverance. I would I could talk of my precious Master as he might speak of himself, or as John might speak, who saw him and bare witness. He could tell in plaintive tones of the sorrows of the man of Calvary; but such as I have I give you. O that God would give you with it the power, the grace, the blessed compulsion to believe on Jesus, to believe on Jesus now.

V. For if not, and here is our last point, God will bear the load for a little while; but if Christ hath not borne it for you, and for me, then THAT SAME LOAD WILL CRUSH US FOR EVER AND EVER.

I find that my text is translated by many learned men in a different way from the version before us: "I will press you as a cart that is full of sheaves presseth your place." That is, just as a heavy loaded waggon pressed into the poor Eastern roads and left there deep furrows—furrows you would hardly think of in a land where we understand road-making so well—just as deep ridges and ruts were cut into the Eastern roads by the loaded waggon, so will I crush you, saith God, with the load of your sin. This is to be your doom, my hearer, if thou art out of Christ. Does it need me to enlarge upon this terror? I think not. It only needs that you should make a personal application of the threatening! Divide yourselves now. Divide yourselves, I say! Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then the threatening is not thine; but if thou believest not, whether thou art standing in yonder aisle, or up there in those far-off galleries, I do conjure you listen to me now as if thou wert the only person here—a Christless soul must be a damned soul; a spirit that believeth not in Christ is condemned already, because it believeth not. How shalt thou escape if

thou neglectest so great salvation? Thus saith the Lord unto thee, "Consider thy ways." By time, by eternity, by life, by death, by heaven, by hell, I do conjure you believe in him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto him; but if ye believe not that Christ is he, ye shall die in your sins. After death the judgment! Oh! the judgment, the thundering trump, the multitude, the crowd, the books, the great white throne, the "Come, ye blessed," the "Depart, ye cursed!" After judgment, to a soul that is out of Christ, Hell! Who among us, who *among* US shall abide with the devouring flame? Who among US, who among US shall dwell with the everlasting burnings? I pray that none of us may. But we *must* unless we fly to Christ. Oh, I beseech thee, my dear hearer, fly to Jesus! I may never see thy face again; thine eyes may never look into mine; but I shake my skirts of your blood, if ye believe not in Christ this morning. My tears entreat you, my lips would woo you. There is mercy for you; God has had patience with you; let his longsuffering lead you to repentance. He willeth not the death of any, but had rather that they should turn unto him and live; and this turning is simply this—trust Jesus with your soul, and he shall take your sin, and you shall stand accepted in the beloved. Wilt thou? Nay, I know thou wilt not unless the Spirit of God shall constrain thee; but at the least, if thou wilt not, it shall not be for want of pleading and entreating. Come, 'tis mercy's welcome hour. I pray thee, come. Jesus with pierced hands invites thee, though thou hast rejected him. Thou hast stood against him long, he knocks again, his undefeated, unconquerable love defies thy wickedness and will have thee. Sinner, wilt thou have him or no? "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." God help you to come, God make you come, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FLESH AND SPIRIT—A RIDDLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 31ST, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."—Psalm lxxiii. 22—25.

OUR Lord Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. With some reserve we might almost say the same of David. Of all the worthies whose lives are written out at length in Holy Writ, David possesses an experience of the most striking, varied, and instructive character. In his history we meet with temptations and complications of temptations not to be discovered, at least as a connected whole, in other saints of ancient times. Trials which stand out in the lives of other men as isolated hills, form whole chains and ranges of mountains in the case of the son of Jesse. David knew the trials of all ranks and conditions of men. Kings have their troubles, and David wore a crown: the peasant has his cares, and David handled the shepherd's crook. The wanderer has many hardships, and David abode in the caves of Engedi: the captain has his difficulties, and David found the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him. The psalmist of Israel was tried by his friends, his counsellor Ahithophel forsook him. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." His worst foes were they of his own household. His children were his greatest afflictions. Amnon disgraces him, Absalom excites revolt, Adonijah disturbs his dying bed. The temptations of poverty and wealth, of honour and reproach, of health and sickness, all tried their power upon him. He had tribulations from without; it needs not that I should remind you that during his long life they came from every quarter. He had temptations from within, for the man after God's own heart not only knew what it was to be assailed, but to be carried by storm, by fierce and terrible passions. I may grant, perhaps, that Job's trial was more severe than any *one* that fell to David; but yet I know not; possibly the burning of Ziklag, when his wives were carried away captive, and all that he had was consumed, and his men spake of stoning him, may have been even a severer trial than Job's when he sat upon a dunghill and scraped himself with a potsherd; and I am not sure, but I think that mournful procession over the brook Kedron

in David's later life, when his own son thirsted for his blood, had in it a Gethsemane bitterness that is hardly to be found in the tribulation which fell to the patriarch of Uz. Job must fairly yield the palm in one respect, for his was no life-long siege, but only one sharp and furious attack; David, however, no sooner escaped from one trial than he fell into another; no sooner emerged from one season of despondency and alarm, than he was again brought into the lowest depths, and all God's waves and billows rolled over him Now, it is from this cause, I take it, that David's psalms are so universally the delight of experienced Christians. Into whatsoever frame of mind we may be cast, David seems to have described our emotions, whether they be of ecstasy or depression, to the very letter. He was an able master of the human heart, because he had been tutored in that best of all schools, the school of real, heartfelt, personal experience. You will find that as we grow matured in grace and in years, we love the psalms better. Many young believers are most fond of the doctrinal parts of Scripture, and I admire that holy curiosity which leads them to desire to understand all the revelation of God in the doctrine of grace: practical Christians are often more fond of studying the Evangelists and Proverbs, but I find that the grey-headed veterans, the sorely-troubled Christians—those who have done business on great waters—while they love the doctrine, while they delight in the practice as set forth in the life of Christ, yet somehow or other the Psalms of the sweet singer of Israel yield them savoury meat such as their soul loveth, and they are made in the Psalms to "lie down in green pastures" of tender grass.

Probably the first remark which will be suggested by reading the Psalms will be this—how varied they are. What an extraordinary man David is, what changes there are in the weather of his soul, what bright sunlight days, what dark cloudy nights, what calms as though his life were a sea of glass, what terrible trials as if the glass were mingled with fire. One time we find him crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," and anon he sings, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." One hour we hear him sigh forth, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing," and then we find him exulting, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid." How wondrously he rises to heaven, and how awfully he dives into the deeps. Surely, brethren, we who have known anything of spiritual and inner life do not marvel at this, for we also change. Alas! what a contrast between the sin that doth so easily beset us, and the grace which gives us to reign in heavenly places. How different the sorrow of an abject distrust which breaketh us in pieces as with a strong east wind, and the joy of a holy confidence which bears us on to heaven as with a propitious gale! What changes between walking with God to-day, and falling into the mire to-morrow, triumphing over sin, death, and hell yesterday, and to-day led captive by the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. Verily, we cannot understand ourselves, and a description which would suit us yesterday would be ill-adapted for to-day, and quite out of place for to-morrow. Scarcely ever are we in the

same mind an hour. Great God, how infinitely glorious art thou in thine immutability, when contrasted with thy fickle, frail, unstable creature—man.

It falls to my lot, this morning, to open up in some humble measure, the secrets of inward experience. I can but hope to do it in a very shallow measure, for I am but a youth, and am not worthy to instruct some of you who have been men of war from your youth up. Yet, I may serve the weaklings of the flock, if I inform them of the strife they must expect from the flesh, and comfort their hearts with a foretaste of the certain victory which the Lord has secured to them through the spirit. We shall *first listen to the confessions of the psalmist concerning the flesh;* then, *to his expressions with regard to the spirit;* then, *to his soul's exultation when looking to both flesh and spirit, he crieth out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."*

I. First, we are to listen to THE PSALMIST'S CONFESSION CONCERNING THE FLESH.

Remember, beloved, this is a saint of God; this is a highly advanced saint; this is the man after God's own heart; this is one of the special favourites of heaven—one of the men to whom God revealed himself as he doth not unto the world; and yet you hear him telling us his inner life, and he begins by saying, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee."

The word "*foolish*," when it issues from David's mouth, means more than it signifies in ordinary language. To be called a fool is no great compliment to any man; but when that word means atheist, despiser of that which is good—when it means a forgetter of God, a lover of evil, a destroyer of one's own soul, then to be called a fool is something at which a man may take umbrage indeed. David, in one of the former verses of the Psalm, writes, "I was envious of *the foolish* when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," which shows that the folly he intended had sin in it. Now, he puts himself down as being one of these fools, and adds a little word which is to give intensity to the adjective—"SO foolish was I." How foolish he could not tell. It was a sinful folly, a folly which was not to be excused by frailty, but to be condemned because of its perverseness and wilful ignorance. What, and do *we* call ourselves wise? Do we, followers of the lowly Saviour, profess that we have attained perfection, or have been so chastened that the rod has whipped all our wilfulness out of us? Ah, this were pride indeed! If David was foolish, what fools would you and I be in our own esteem if we could but see ourselves. Look back, believer: think of your doubting God when he hath been so faithful to you—think of your foolish outcry of "Not so my Father," when he crossed his hands in affliction to give you the larger blessing; think, I say, of the many times when you have read his providences in the dark, misinterpreting his dispensations, and groaning out, "All these things are against me," when they were all working together for your good! Think how often you have chosen sin because of its pleasure, when indeed, that pleasure was a root of pain and bitterness to you! How often you have forgotten to honour God when you had noble opportunities of serving him.

I for one must take my place at the bar and plead guilty to the indictment of a sinful folly; and I think everyone who knows his own heart, however far advanced in grace he may be, must do the same. In the present tense I put it sorrowfully, "So foolish am I."

Further, our psalmist adds, "and ignorant." A man who, after years of such experience as David, should yet say "I am ignorant," must either be very humble, or else there must be such a force upon his conscience that he cannot resist the confession. And indeed, if you will read the Psalm and see into what a mistake David had fallen—that of envying the present prosperity of the ungodly, you may grant that he was ignorant indeed, to forget the dreadful end of those who only prosper that they may be fattened like bullocks for the slaughter. But you and I have been quite as ignorant. We said yesterday, "Now I shall never doubt God again; he has helped me through this great trouble, and I know that I shall be able to trust him come what may." But this very morning you awoke with a distrustful thought. What ignorance is this, to forget the lesson which you learned but yesterday, and which you thought you knew by heart! Here you have been trying for months to resign yourself to God's will. He took away from you one very dear to you, and you longed to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" and you did say it by an overwhelming effort, but you cannot say it now, for feeling has trodden down faith; you are so foolish and so ignorant that you have forgotten what you vowed to learn; and what you meant to say perpetually, you have failed to say in this, perhaps the first great trial in your life. Some men think when they have learned half-a-dozen doctrines, that now they know everything; and certain other folks I know of, when they pass through a few years of experience, set themselves up for standards. Ah, beloved, when we think we know best, and fancy that we have grown wise, then we prove our folly; our impudence is engraven on our foreheads, and FOOL is written there in capital letters, when we think we are wise. Oh! the depths of the wisdom of God! Who can understand the full meaning of the doctrines of grace! Oh! the depths of the experience of the believer who shall dare to profess that he has passed over all the seas, and has crossed all the mountains over which a believer must climb. If we could but see ourselves, we should consider our knowledge to be nothing, and our ignorance to be all. We are in the twilight, let us not call it noon; we are in the mists and fogs, let us not suppose that we are in an unclouded atmosphere. When we think we see all wisdom, it is because we are blind; and when we fancy we have discovered everything, it is because we are mocked by the illusions of our pride, and see nothing as yet aright.

I know I address some of you who, when you are alone quietly engaged in meditation, think to yourselves "Well, if ever there was such a stupid saint as I am, I am much mistaken. I seem to have the least understanding of any man. I read the Scriptures, and I sometimes get a hold of them, but at seasons I cannot for the life of me even believe them to be true; I know the power of prayer, but yet there are times when I could not pray if my soul depended on it, and can only groan. In fact, sometimes "if aught is felt, 'tis only pain to find I cannot feel."

Yet I have been fed under the ministry; I have had many troubles, and much communion with Christ, but yet here am I, knowing nothing, just a schoolboy, sitting on the lowest form, and trying to spell out his A, B, C, such a thorough fool that I often pride myself upon my knowledge, and condemn my brother for ignorance, not seeing the beam that is in my own eye, trying to pull the mote from his eye." Is this the soliloquy of your heart? I know it has often been mine. If it be yours, we have just hit the meaning of David when he uses this expression—"So foolish was I, and ignorant."

But now comes the crowning word, which you would think too degrading for David—"I was as a *beast* before thee." Indeed, the original has in it no word of comparison; it ought to be rather translated "I was a very beast before thee," and we are told that the Hebrew word being in the plural number gives it a peculiar emphasis, indicating some monstrous or astonishing beast. It is the word used by Job which is interpreted "Behemoth,"—"I was a very monster before thee"—not only a beast, but one of the most brutish of all beasts, one of the most stubborn and intractable of all beasts. I think no man can go much lower than this in humble confession. This is a description of human nature and of the old man in the renewed saint which is not to be excelled. How far does this hold true in your experience and mine? Well, I think first, we have often been made to compare ourselves to beasts because of our *worldly-mindedness*. There is the swine grubbing in the earth for its roots; what cares it about the stars? And even the fleet courser as it crosses the mead, what knoweth it about the angels and the harps of heaven? Educate the beast as you may, it hath no care beyond its fleshly appetite. Oh, how much are we like this, even we who are renewed by divine grace! The last six days it has been "Shop, shop, shop," with you from morning to night. You bowed to the family altar, and you tried to pray at eventide, carking care depressed you till it was hard to offer real supplication. A thousand things have bewildered you; the cash-book, the day-book; those losses; those many workmen to be looked after, or the servants in the house have distracted your mind, and the world comes in till you feel, "O that I could get rid of these things for a moment! O that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" But you cannot, for your soul lies cleaving to the dust. Perhaps there comes a knock at the door just when you *want* to be knocking at God's door, and some one wants to see *you* when you want to see your God. You cannot rest in Jesus as you would; you are called upon to look after accounts, shillings, five-pound-notes, creditors and debtors, until you cry, "O God, I am like a beast before thee. How can I ever hope to enter heaven?" You remember that hymn of Dr. Watts, commencing

"Come holy Spirit, heavenly dove."

What a sweet begining, but how dolefully true are the middle verses. Surely they never ought to be sung, but to be sighed:

"Dear Lord and shall we ever live
At this poor dying rate:
Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
And thine to us so great."

What is this but the same confession in other words, "I was as a beast before thee."

Let us add another shade of black to the picture. We might often compare ourselves to the beast from *our want of any emotion towards heavenly things.* I am quite sure Rutherford was right when he said, "No devil in the world was so bad as having no devil." Not to be tempted, is perhaps, the worst temptation that can befall a man. There are times—I suppose it is so with you, it is with me—times when my soul is like a dead calm, these seasons I dread.

"No stir in the air, no stir in the sea
The ship was as still as a ship could be."

What mariner likes these dead calms? I am sure I tremble to encounter more of them. Better the healthy hurricane than the pestilential quiet. You would pray, but you cannot command the earnestness and fervour you desire; you would repent, you *feel* that you would repent, but no tear will flow, for the heart is hard; you *would* praise God, and the lips can utter the words, but the soul cannot join the music; you *would* stir yourself to some lofty emotion, but you cannot; the heart *will* not feel, it has grown cold, and a sort of death-sleep has come over you like the sleep which is said to fall upon the wanderer in the snow when he cometh near to die. Oh, to be roused from this is a heaven-sent blessing, to be stirred even though it be by a hurricane of affliction, or a thunder-clap of trouble. It is an awful thing to be in this apathetic state. Then it is that the believer cries, "I am as a beast before thee." You are dead as the seat you sit on on the Sabbath; going to the ordinance itself, eating the bread and drinking the wine, yet feeling no fellowship with Christ; joining in the song and loving it, but singing with no feeling, no heart; going to prayer-meetings, feeling you would not stop away for all the world, and yet no life, no power, no thought, no vigour. Does some young Christian look at me and say, "What, do old Christians feel like that?" I say, "They do, at times." Sad is it that we should have to confess man to be so vile, but such he is, and such each of us have found ourselves out to be; and let the believer live but a little while and he will have to use David's language, and cry, "I was as a beast before thee."

See yet again, how often have we had to complain that we are like the beasts for our *short-sightedness!* The beast cannot look forward to eternity; it cannot cast its eye adown the centuries and look to the fulfilment of prophecy in the fulness of time; it has to be content with the things that are near, the things of the hour and of the day. Even so short-sighted are you and I! We think we see the end when we are only viewing the beginning. We get our telescope out sometimes to look to the future, and we breathe on the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety, and then we think we see clouds and darkness before us. If we are in trouble, we see every day new straits attend, and wonder where the scene will end; but we conclude that it must end in our destruction. "God hath forgotten to be gracious." We think, "He hath in anger shut up the bowels of compassion." Oh this short-sightedness! When you and I ought to believe in God—when we ought to look at the heaven that awaiteth us, and the glory for which

these light afflictions are preparing us—when we ought to be looking through the cloud to the Eternal Sun which never knows an eclipse—when we should be resting on the invisible arm of the immortal God and triumphing in his love, we are mourning and distrusting. God forgive us for this; but in these things verily, we have been as beasts before him.

I might add again, how often believers have to complain that the *animal passions* will bestir themselves in them until they feel the beast within them. I shall not go deep into this path of painful experience; I only hint at it that some who may have been surprised at it as though it were a novelty, may know that it is common to man. He that hath fellowship with God will sometimes feel the devil within him till he thinketh himself a devil, and sometimes too (the Lord have mercy upon his servants) when the temptation cometh in an unguarded moment they may be betrayed, and Satan may triumph. If then, they can look back upon a burst of anger or sin, and not say after it, "I was as a beast before thee, O God," then I despair of them. Other men commit these sins; other men fall into these iniquities, but it remains for the Christian only to abhor himself on account of them. To sin is no spot of God's children; but to hate sin, humbly to confess it, and to lay in the very dust with abasement on account it, this is one of the choice requirements of the truly begotten sons of heaven. Oh, I know that many of you, with a groaning that could not be uttered, have been made to feel in your heart that though you be the elect of God, and bought with precious blood, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, yet still you are, when the flesh prevails, as beasts before God. Indeed, my text, as I have said, seems to make us even worse than the beasts; for the comparison which David uses, is not to a common and ordinary creature, but to some dread monster, a Behemoth. When we look within, there is nothing lovely; we are all a mass of distorted parts wrongly joined together. There is much of pride, and lust, and anger, and what is there of good? Brethren, our apostle said in him there dwelt no good thing, and you and I are no better than he; nothing good, but everything that is evil; and all the evil put into the most exaggerated form and shape, until he that hath seen himself, has been ready to go mad to think that he should ever be such a being as he is. O grace divine! O sovereign love! were it not for these we should lie down in despair, when we think of the uncomeliness of our nature. More stubborn than Behemoth are we; God can tame the creatures; man even can put a bit into the mouth of the horse, and he hath a bridle for the ass; but we, more untractable than the brutes, are not to be restrained from sin; they are obstinate, but their obstinacy may be quelled and overcome; sometimes harshness, and anon, kindness can subdue the most stubborn brute; but our tongue and heart can no man tame. Evil, only evil, and that continually, still remaineth our heart, kicking against the pricks even to the last; remaining even unto death like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. What shall I say of human nature as the Christian discovers it in himself? I will only say it is impossible to exaggerate its evil. You shall describe it in the blackest and foulest terms, and you shall find after all, believers who will say

man is worse than your black portrait, for only David's language will suit us, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee."

I shall not dwell longer on this part. I have indeed only brought it out because I know there are so many young Christians who are dreadfully alarmed when they discover what they are by nature, and who, indeed, begin on a wrong theory, by supposing that the grace of God comes to make old Adam new; whereas the grace of God does not change our old nature; it gives us a new nature, which subdues the old, but the old nature is there still. Old Adam is old Adam even when the new Adam is in the heart. The flesh is evil, undiluted evil, just as much as before Christ entered the soul. Therefore, grace struggleth with the flesh, good striveth with evil, and the life of the believer becomes a constant and perpetual battle, the one principle striving against the other till grace at last getteth the victory, and the saint is "afterwards received to glory."

II. We shall now turn to the faithful EXPRESSIONS OF THE SPIRIT, and God help us while we enlarge upon them. How changed the language now! Nothing of the beast here, but rather the spirit seems to grow angelic, and to borrow heaven's harps. Hear its first sweet word like music. "*Nevertheless.*" As if, notwithstanding all, not one atom the less was it true and certain that David was saved and accepted, and that the blessings he is now about to speak of were his by a perpetual entail—"Nevertheless I am continually with thee." Here is *divine regard.* Fully conscious of his own lost estate, and of the deceitfulness and vileness of his nature, yet, by a glorious burst of faith, he says, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." I shall not preach on that, but just let you think it over. Let each one soliloquise—"I to-day, a black and detestable sinner, am nevertheless, if I believe in Jesus, continually with God! Continually upon his *mind;* he is always thinking of me for my good. Continually before his *eye;* the eye of the Lord never sleepeth, but is perpetually watching for my good. Continually in his *hand,* so that none shall be able to pluck me thence until omnipotence itself shall be overcome. Continually on his *heart,* graven there, worn there as a memorial, even as the high priest wore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart for ever." Tried and afflicted soul, vexed with the tempest within, look at the calm without. "Nevertheless"—O say it in thy heart, and suck the comfort from it, "I am continually with thee." Thou always thinkest of me, O God. The bowels of thy love continually yearn towards me. Thou art always making providence work for my good. Thou dost never pluck me from thy heart; thou hast set me as a signet upon thine arm, thy love is strong as death, many waters cannot quench it; thine affection is hot as coals of juniper, and yet, yet it is true I am as a beast before thee, and when thou lookest at me thou canst see nothing in me apart from Christ, but what is debased and beast-like. Surprising grace, thou seest me in Christ, and though in myself abhorred, thou beholdest me as wearing Christ's garments, and washed in his blood I stand—

> "With the Saviour's garments on,
> Holy as the Holy One."

And I am thus continually in thy favour—"continually with thee." Oh, it is a child's faith—an infant faith, to be able to say "I am with God," when I have the light of his favour shining on me; but oh, when I see the blackness of my heart, still to believe that I am continually with Him—this is a man's faith, what if I say, brethren, a giant's faith? It is so easy when you have many graces and many virtues to say, "Christ can save me." Yes, but when your follies stare you in the face, when your sins rebuke you, still to say "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," this is faith indeed. Blessed faith that doth not shut its eye to the disease, but seeing it, and knowing all its venom and deadly power, still trusts in to the Balm of Gilead, and believes that it can heal!

But you will notice next, that our psalmist is not content with claiming divine regard, he goes on to speak of *divine help and gracious operation.* "Thou holdest me by thy right hand."—Here is a recognition of *the past.* I am black and full of sin and treachery, why have I not fallen more? Because thy hand has held me up. O God, if thou hadst not kept thy saints, they had been the vilest of transgressors. Oh! what should any one of us have been, though we may be as stars now, if it had not been for God's right hand? What should we have been but black blots for ever, if God had left us? Look back, beloved, at the temptations from which you have been delivered, the trials from which you have escaped—to what do you owe all these? Why, to the fact that he has held you by your right hand, and is holding you by your right hand now. Let *the present* be a theme for gratitude. At this hour your feet are almost gone, but not quite, for he holdeth you. At this moment you are ready to say, "The Lord hath forgotten me quite; God will be gracious no more;" but he has as firm a grip of you to-day as ever he had. Oh, what joy it is to feel that God has a firm hold of us! If we only feel that *we* have a hold of him, then our hand may fail; but if He hath a hold of us, then neither death nor hell shall ever triumph to our casting down. And this is true of *the future.* He will hold us with his right hand. If we believe on Christ to-day, we shall certainly be kept till we see the face of Christ in glory everlasting. Here am I, but a stripling fresh come to the battle, and there may be many years of wars and fightings for me, but "I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Here are some of you whose hair has turned grey with many years of trial in the wilderness, what say you, has God forgotten you? Veterans in God's army, has he forsaken you? Has he deserted any of you in the moment of trial? No. Then let us together, young and old, bless his name, that he holdeth us with his right hand.

But what next? We must not tarry long on any one sentence. Our psalmist goes on to speak of *divine guidance.* "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," saith he. "I am foolish, I shall be sure to choose the wrong way; I am ignorant, I do not even know the right; I am a beast, and those beastly instincts of mine will constantly lead me astray, but thou shalt guide me by thy counsel." See, brethren, how he throws himself on his God,—he will have nothing to do with himself. "THOU *shalt*" is his confidence. He is completely weaned from looking within.

He casteth himself flat on his God. "Thou shalt guide me *with thy counsel.*" That *counsel* I take it, means first, *God's decrees.*

"He that formed in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb;
All my times shall ever be
Ordered by his wise decree."

Graciously hath he ordained every step of our way from this time till we arrive in heaven; graciously hath he ordained every temptation and trial.

"Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

I shall do after all what he decrees, have nothing but what he ordains, suffer nothing but what he thinks fit. I shall do nothing without his permission or aid. I *must* prevail, for thus his counsel runs to bring his many sons to glory—"Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel." Many people do not like predestination, but I think when they get washed up on a rock in some dark troublous day, they will be glad to cling to this truth. Brethren, I thank God that I know there is as much the decree of God for a grain of dust that pains my eye, as there is in the cloud and tempest. The chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. In the great and in the little, Jehovah reigneth. Standing in the chariot of providence he holds the reins, and when the coursers seem to be wild and to know no bit or bridle, he guideth them according to his will. O rest thou in this, believer: he shall guide thee with his counsel. But this counsel also represents *the written word*—his decree is *his* counsel, his written Word is *our* counsel, *his* counsel *to us*. Happy is the man who has God's word always to direct him! What were the mariner without his compass? What were the Christian without the Bible? This is the unerring chart, the map in which every shoal is described, and all the channels from the port of destruction to the haven of salvation mapped, and marked by one who has sailed along the sea. Blessed, blessed be thou, O God, that we may trust thee to guide us now and guide us even to the end! And all this is to us who are like brutes before him! O my soul, hast thou ever known what it is to be thoroughly cast down till there was no hope left to thee, and yet to be carried up till there was no doubt left to thee? 'Twas but yesterday, I knew the whole of this experience in my own heart. A more wretched miserable being than I, hell could scarcely produce, and yet a more happy joyful-hearted creature heaven could hardly find. How, you say, how was this? When I looked within and marked depravity and death everywhere, my soul was troubled almost unto d. h; but when I looked to Christ and saw the fulness of the covenant and the complete way in which he covered all my sin and blotted out all my iniquity, my spirit was like a bird that had escaped from the fowler and soared singing up to heaven with joy and gratitude. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel."

Then comes the last, *divine reception*, "and afterward receive me to glory." Oh! how sweet is this—"receive me to glory." Catch it, Christian. I do not want you to think of what *I* say this morning. I want you to think of what *you* have felt, and what *the Lord* is doing for you.

He will receive *you* to glory—*you!* Why, if it had been said, "He shall damn thee to all eternity," thy heart would have said, "Ah, that I richly deserve;" but he saith, "I will receive thee to glory." Slipping, sliding, falling, and yet I will bring thee safe at last; wandering, erring, straying, yet I will receive thee to glory. Full of sin, even to the last full of sin, haunted with unbelief even to thy dying hour; tempted perhaps on thy death-bed, thy very couch a part of the battle-field, and thy pillow a castle to be stormed or to be defended—yet I will receive thee to glory. Brethren, that moment when you and I shall be received into glory—can we conceive it? Thou art gone, frail body, no more pain from thee; but better still, thou art gone, vile flesh—no more temptation, no more sin. Old Adam, thou shalt rot. Let the worms devour thee; glad am I to be rid of thee.

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

And this is your portion and my portion, though doubts and fears prevail, and we hardly dare to say that Christ is ours; yet, resting on him, on him only, having nothing of our own, looking to his flowing wounds, covered with his matchless righteousness, saved at last we shall be, and we will sing for ever to that matchless grace which saved us even to the end.

III. To conclude, the psalmist has been looking at his complex self; at the flesh, and groaning over that; and then at his spirit, confident in its God, and he winds the whole story thus: "WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE?" I have known men lose their property, and yet they did not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" I have known a man lose his wife, and yet look to earth to find some comfort. I have known him lose child after child, and yet he still thought the world had many charms. I have known him sick, yet he has had pleasure in vanity. But there is one thing which cannot happen—a man cannot know himself so as to feel his folly and his ignorance, to feel the beast-like character of his nature, without at once turning his eye to Christ. There is nothing that makes one love Christ, I think, so much as a sense of His love balanced with a sense of our unworthiness of it. It is sweet to think that Christ loves us; but oh, to remember that we are black as the tents of Kedar, and yet he loves us! This is a thought which may well wean us from everything else beside. That he should love me when I have some graces and some virtues is not a great marvel; but that he should love me, when in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing; when I have no charms, no beauties, not one attractive attribute, not one trait of character that is worthy of his regard—that he should love me then—oh! if this does not make me swear a divorce to the world, what can? Methinks, believer, thou wilt come to Jesus and put thy hand in his, and say, "Thou, thou alone art mine. No other love can I have but this. I cannot love the world, when I have known such affection as thine. And when I see how little I deserve it, I must love thee." Then, the spirit flies to heaven, thinking of all that joy and rapture which is to come, but remembering as it enters paradise that it was on earth but as a beast before God, it looks all round through heaven, and says to angels, "I cannot think of you, I can

only think of him who could love so base, so vile a creature as I am." Surely, passing by principalities and powers, forgetting for awhile the blood-washed company, the sacramental host of God's elect, we shall find out the throne where Jesus sits, and we shall sing to him, and this shall be the song, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Contemplate much, believer, your own sad state, contemplate yet more your own safety and perfection in Christ, and these two things together shall make you despise the world and its joys, make you tread on the world and its trials, and make you feel such a knitting and union of heart to Christ, to Christ Jesus only, that you may say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

I thought I saw just now before my eyes a dark and horrible pit, and down deep below, where the eye could not reach, lay a being broken in pieces, whose groans and howlings pierced the awful darkness and amazed my ears. Methought I saw a bright one fly from the highest heaven, and in an instant dive into that black darkness till he was lost and buried in it. I waited for a moment, and to my mind's eye I saw two spirits rising from the horrid deep, with arms entwined, as though one was bearing up the other, I saw them emerge from the gloom. I heard the fairest of them say, as he mounted into light, "I have loved thee, and given myself for thee." And I heard the other say, who was that poor broken one just now, "I was foolish and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee." Ere I could write the words both spirits had risen into mid air, and I heard one of them say "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise," and the other whispered "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." As they mounted higher, I heard one say, "None shall pluck thee out of my hand," and I heard the other say "Thou holdest me by my right hand." As still they rose they continued the loving dialogue. "I will guide thee with mine eye," said the bright one; the other answered "Thou shall guide me with thy counsel." They reached the bright clouds that separate earth from heaven, and as they parted to make way for the glorious One, he said, "I will give thee to sit upon my throne even as I have overcome, and sit upon my Father's throne," and the other answered, "And thou shalt afterward receive me to glory." Lo the clouds closed their doors, and they were gone. Methought again they opened, and I saw those two spirits soaring onward beyond stars, and sun, and moon; right up beyond principalities and powers; on, beyond cherubim and seraphim; right on beyond every name that is named, until in that ineffable brightness, dark with unsufferable light, the awful glory of the Deity whom eye cannot see, both those spirits were lost, and there came the sound of joyous hallelujahs from the spirits which are before the throne. May it be your lot and mine thus to be brought up, for we are thus fallen; may it be ours to be thus caught up to the third heaven, for we are thus broken and cast down into the lowest hell by nature. God give us faith in Christ. Faith in Christ—that is the link, the bond, the tie. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

EZEKIEL'S DESERTED INFANT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live."—Ezekiel xvi. 5, 6.

DOUBTLESS the Lord here describes the Jewish people when they began to multiply in the land of Egypt, and were grievously oppressed by Pharaoh. Pharaoh had commanded them to cast out the male children that they might perish. Hence, the figure of an infant deserted, cast out into the open field to perish by wild beasts, by starvation, or exposure, was a very apt portrait of the youthful state of Israel, when God looked upon her in love, and brought her out of Egypt to set her in a goodly land. But all the best divines and expositors concur in the belief that we have here also a most extraordinarily apt and significant description of the human race by nature, and of the way in which God in divine mercy passes by the sinner when utterly lost and helpless, and by the power of the Spirit, bids him "Live." At any rate, we intend so to consider it this morning. Without any preface, for we need none, we shall, first of all, bid you *look at the misery of man's estate as set before us in the present verses;* then, next, we shall *search for motives which could urge the Lord to have pity upon this miserable one;* and then, thirdly, we shall pause awhile to *listen to the divine mandate by which this unhappy being is delivered from his lost estate.* "I said unto thee, Live; yea, I said unto thee, Live."

I. At the outset, I shall direct your contemplations to a survey of THE MISERY OF MAN'S ESTATE.

The verse presents to us an infant exposed to die. All the common offices that were necessary for its life and health have been forgotten. Its heartless parents have laid it out in the open field, having no regard whatever for it; and there it lies before our eye, covered with blood, exposed to wild beasts, famishing, ready to perish. Among many heathen nations there existed the barbarous custom of leaving deformed children to perish in the woods or fields. Among the Spartans it was an established regulation to abandon their weaker offspring to

perish at the foot of Mount Taygetus; and in these times there are dark places of the earth which are full of this unnatural cruelty. The Jews were certainly free from this sin, but it was a practice of their near neighbours, and therefore, well known to them; and moreover, the remembrance of Egypt and their great lawgiver among the crocodiles of the Nile, and all the males murdered by royal decree, would make the metaphor very simple to them.

1. At the very first glance, we remark, here is an *early ruin*. It is an infant. A thousand sorrows that one so young should be so deeply taught in misery's school! It is an infant; it has not yet tasted joy, but yet it knoweth pain and sorrow to the full. How early art thou blasted, O sweet flower! How soon are thy young dawnings quenched in darkness, O rising sun! A ruin so terrible and so early has fallen upon each of us. Let proud man kick against the doctrine as he may, Scripture telleth us assuredly that we are "born in sin and shapen in iniquity." We came not into this world as Adam came into the garden, without flaw, without condemnation, without evil propensities; but lo, by one man's offence we are all made sinners, and through his desperate fall our blood is tainted and our nature is corrupt. From the very birth we go astray, speaking lies, and in the very birth we lie under the condemnation of the law of God. It is not mine to defend this doctrine, to answer objections to it, or to bring arguments for it; I simply announce what God has himself revealed by the mouth of his servant David, and also more fully by the tongue of the apostle Paul. Man, except God have mercy on thee, thou art lost, and lost from thy very beginning! Thou didst not come into this world as one who might stand or fall, thou wast fallen already; an original and birth-sin had seized upon thee in the womb, and thou wast even then as an infant cast out to perish and to die. There is hardly any doctrine more humbling than that of natural depravity or original sin; it has been the main point of attack for all those who hate the gospel, and it must be maintained and valiantly vindicated by those who would exalt Christ, since the greatness and glory of his salvation lies mainly in the desperateness of the ruin from which he hath redeemed us. Man, think not to save thyself by thy works; boast not of the excellence of thy character and of thy nature; thou art a traitor's son, thou art a felon's child! An act of attainder was passed upon thy father's house, and thou wast born under the law and under the curse, obnoxious to divine wrath in the very moment when thy first breath was drawn. Sad heritage of sin! Miserable estate of sorrow! How deep the ruin of the fall! Oh, to grace what debtors we are, that out of this ruin it can lift us up to heights of glory!

2. The next very apparent teaching of the text is *utter inability*. It is an infant—what can it do for itself? If it were a child of some few years it might be able, with tottering feet, to find its way to some shelter; if it had the gift of articulate speech, it might sob out its wants, and tell to the passer-by what it needed; but it is an infant, it cannot speak. It knows pain, but it has not mind enough to know wherefore the pain is there. It is ignorant; and although conscious of its ills, its untutored, undeveloped intellect can neither describe the evil, nor prescribe the remedy.

Though it may cast its little eyes around, even if help were there it were not in its power to avail itself of the proffered aid. It is impotent, helpless, utterly powerless; if anything is to be done for it, it must all be done by another's hand. Not even clay on the potter's wheel is more helpless than this infant as it now lies cast out in the open field. Such is human nature; it can by no means help towards its own restoration. "Dead," saith our apostle, "dead in trespasses and sins," and what shall the dead in their graves do towards resurrection? Shall the worm become mother of life, or shall corruption be the father of immortality? No, trumpet of God, there is no life in the dull, cold ear of death, and no hearing in the hollow skull of the skeleton; if the graves open, a divine hand must break the seal, upheave the mould, and uplift the mouldering corpse. If there be resurrection, it must come from God, and from God alone. It must be a miracle in the beginning, and a miracle even to the end. My hearers, I am not the author of this doctrine, but simply the declarer of what God reveals. Ye are so lost, that ye cannot by the most desperate efforts of your own save yourselves; nay, worse, so lost that by nature ye have no wish to be saved, and will not make the efforts or desire to make them. Ye hate God. It is a cutting accusation, but it is true, and may God the Holy Ghost make ye feel its truth; naturally, I say, you hate the Lord; by nature you love vanity, and not God's truth; you love sin, and do not wish to be delivered from it. Holiness ye choose not; God's commandments ye abhor. Your nature hath become so evil that the Ethiopian may sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots, than ye of yourself learn to do well.

But, mark you—and this is a thought that may crush our boastings and make us hang our head like a bulrush evermore—this inability is our own sin. This is laid at our door, not as an excuse for our sinfulness, but as a frightful aggravation of our guilt, that we have become so bad that we cannot make ourselves good, that our nature is now so desperately evil, both by its native depravity and by our continual practice of sin, that iniquity has become our nature; so that it is as natural to us to sin as for water to descend, or sparks to fly upward.

> "Where vice has held its empire long,
> 'T will not endure the least control;
> None but a power divinely strong
> Can turn the current of the soul."

Ye cannot, souls, ye *cannot* save yourselves; ye are as helpless as the infant cast out; your inability is utter and entire.

3. Apparent, too, is yet a third misfortune—we are *utterly friendless.* "None eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee." We have no friend in heaven or in earth that can do aught for us, unless God shall interpose. Grant you that a tender parent may pity, but no parent can change his child's nature or cleanse away the sin of his offspring. Let it be granted that there are ministers of Christ whose tearful eyes would woo you to Christ, but the most earnest evangelist cannot quicken your soul. The most thundering of all God's Boanerges cannot awake the dead. Let it be considered that angels are anxious for your conversion, that were you saved they would clap their wings with joy and make glad holiday in heaven;

but an angel's power cannot snatch you from the grave of your sin, nor could the whole host of seraphs with their kindred cherubs combined, do aught to deliver you from the ruin into which by Adam's sin, and your own, you have been brought. Weep and lament your kinsfolk may for you, but no lamentation can make an atonement for your sin, no human tears can cleanse your filthiness, no Christian zeal can clothe you with righteousness, no yearning love can sanctify your nature. Friendless, helpless, and ruined from our earliest state—good God, what creatures are men! Sinai thunders at us, the law condemns us, justice bares its sword, holiness is incensed, and truth is sworn to destroy. Where, where shall we fly, if thou refuse us, O God!

4. Furthermore, our text very clearly reveals to us that we are by nature in a sad state of *exposure*. Cast out into the open field, left in a wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goeth about, seeking whom he may devour—such is the estate of human nature: unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers. Little do any of us know how exposed by nature we are to sloth, to drunkenness, to lust, and pride, and unbelief, to all those young lions which hunt in company with the great lion of the pit who seeketh whom he may devour. O Lord God, thou alone knowest the awful dangers which prowl around an unregenerate man; what mischiefs waylay him; what crimes beset him; what follies haunt him! As God only knows the fulness of the guilt of even one sin, so his infinite mind alone can grasp the number of those tremendous temptations which are planted like snares of death in the path of an unconverted soul. Death is after thee, O thou helpless one; hell yawns for thee, sin longs to devour thee; friend thou hast none, but foes thou hast many. Armed and mighty are those who would destroy thee, and thou hast no power nor will to resist them. Thou art as a helpless infant in a tiger's jaws. Fascinated by the serpent eyes of sin, thou art paralysed by its witcheries, and so rendered an easy prey for the destroyer.

5. It seems that this child, besides being in this exposed state, was *loathsome*. "Thou wast cast out to the loathing of thy person." It was in such a condition that the sight of it was disgusting, and its person was so destitute of all comeliness that it was absolutely loathed. Such is man by nature, but he will not believe it; he still flattereth himself that he is comely as the curtains of Solomon, while he is black as the tents of Kedar. We think ourselves angels, when we are nearest akin to devils; but when we get akin to angels, then we mourn the devil that still is within us. I know this, that when God the Holy Ghost gives a man a view of himself, he is utterly loathsome in his own esteem. One of the cardinals of the olden times—when cardinals were sometimes saints—happened to pass by a meadow where he saw a shepherd leaning on his crook, weeping. He stopped to ask the lad what made him weep. The lad replied by pointing to the ground, for just at his feet there was a toad. "I was weeping," said he, "to think that God should have made me, a creature so infinitely superior to this loathsome reptile at my feet, and that I should have made myself such a creature that this loathsome thing is superior to me, because it has never sinned." As the cardinal

went his way, he said, "Verily, hath it happened, that the foolish and unlearned enter into the kingdom of heaven before us, for this peasant has found out the truth." Not vipers nor toads are more venomous or more loathsome to men than man must be to God, or would be to himself if he could see himself with the eyes of truth, and if the veil of pride were once lifted up from his eyes. The image of God in man is all obliterated; we have ashes for beauty, shame for glory, rottenness for health, and hell for heaven.

6. We close this fearful description by observing *the certain ruin to which this infant was exposed*, as setting forth the sure destruction of every man if grace prevent not. It is not a question whether man will be lost or not; as to whether man shall enter into the flames of hell or not, is no query; man MUST perish unless God saves. Every one of us *must* be lost to all eternity, unless the strong arm of the divine One interferes. There is no one else to nurture this helpless infant. This infant cannot rescue itself. Lost, lost, lost! Howl its requiem ye lost ones who have gone before, for help or hope there is none, unless the Eternal One shall interpose.

I would, dear hearers, that this strong language, as you may think it, might be felt to be pertinent to your own case, if you are unconverted. I am not selecting special characters, and impeaching certain offenders who have been outrageously wicked; I am not now describing only the harlot, or the burglar, or the murderer, I am speaking of every one of you by nature, of every one of you who have not been born again. This is not complimentary language, but it ill becomes God's minister to compliment any man; we must tell you plainly the truth. You may have been moral, sober, generous, honest; philanthropy may have been as the air you breathe; there may be many good traits in your character that render you amiable to your relatives and friends, but by nature you are not one whit better than the vilest of the vile; and were your nature permitted to show itself in all its foulness, the black fountain is in your heart as much as in those who are banished from their country for their country's good; it is only providence, or the check of society, that keeps it under. You are as much lost and ruined as they. I know I address many of you who have never fled to Christ for refuge, but are on very good terms with yourselves, because in comparison with others your character is blameless. Let me adjure you by the living God that searcheth all hearts, look at yourselves this morning in your fallen state. If you live and die as you now are, there can be nothing for your portion but the flames of hell. God grant you may be snatched from so terrible a doom; but I see not how this can be unless first you are led to see that you deserve this doom, and are made to tremble at the evil of sin and the wrath of the Lord. No doubt, Noah, when he told men they would all be drowned except they fled to the ark, was thought to be very uncharitable, but it was the truest charity which made him warn them. You *must* perish unless you find shelter in Jesus Christ. Your state is so terrible and damnable, that lost you *must be* unless you fly to God's plan of salvation which he has laid down for lost, ruined, helpless sinners. "Micaiah, spake not good but evil," said the king; but he learned afterwards that Micaiah's hardness and boldness came of God, while the smooth

things of the false prophets came from the devil. I do again, then, beseech and entreat you to lay these things to heart. Ruined souls, self-destroyed, ready to perish, without help, without power, cast out and exposed to evils of which you as yet are not aware, but certain ultimately to make your bed in hell, except God deliver you, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Confess your sins before him with broken hearts, weep before him the tears of penitence, and he can, yea, he will deliver and bring up his chosen from the depths of destruction, and his elect ones from the jaws of hell. Thus mournfully have we rehearsed the story of human ruin; let us bless God that we end not here.

II. We are now to search for MOTIVES FOR GOD'S GRACE, and brethren, we have a very difficult search before us when we look to this infant which is cast out, because its loathsomeness and its being covered with its own blood, forbid us at once to hope that there can be anything in it which can merit the esteem of the merciful One. Let us think of some of the motives which may urge men to assist the undeserving.

1. One of the first would be, *necessity*. Some men, I do not doubt, are generous from necessity, that is to say, they feel it necessary to maintain their reputation, and therefore, they are generous before men, or they gain so much self-esteem,—and there is a necessity in man's nature to make him seek after that—that they are willing to be kind that they may be approved within. Not a few are placed in such a position that they could not well refuse to give their help when it is asked of them. But no necessity can ever effect the Most High. The first of all causes must be absolutely independent of every other cause. He acts voluntarily. It belongs to God to say absolutely, "I will." Man may say, "I will," but it must always be with bated breath, for the sovereign fiat of God may contradict him. But God is under no necessity. Hath he a superior? Who is king over him? Who dictateth counsel to the Most High? Who sits at his bar and giveth him advice and warning, and maketh him do according to his pleasure?

Nor had God any necessity, in order to make himself happy or to increase his glory. The praises of angels were enough for him; nay, even the praise of angels is as nothing in his awful sight. His joy is in himself. He findeth within his own infinite essence a sufficiency of delight, He needeth go abroad for nothing, for He filleth all things and He is all in all. If it had been God's will to leave the human race to perish, he might have done it and there was none to say to him, "What doest thou?" And when he doth save man, it is not because there is any compulsion either moral, physical, or spiritual upon Him. He hath done as He wills in this great matter of the redemption and salvation of men. O soul, God is not bound to save thee! Man, thou art lost, and there is nothing that can compel the Almighty to deliver thee. If he do it, it must be according to his own good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

2. In this case, there was nothing in the *birth* of this child, in its original parentage, that could move the passer-by. We are told in some former verses, "thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy

father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," both of them belonging to an accursed race. Look unto the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. There was nothing in your birth and mine why He should have pity on us. Kings, princes, mighty men, boast much of their pedigrees, but the Lord knoweth nothing of the glory of these family trees and ancestries; nay, rather, he leaveth the mighty man in the dust, cutting down the high tree, that he cause the low tree to flourish. He poureth contempt upon princes, and knoweth no respect of persons. All spring from the common race of man, and what is there in our corrupt nature, what is there in us to move the heart of God? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Young man, it is not because your father was godly, that therefore God should be constrained to save you. It is not because your mother was a lady of rank, that therefore the Almighty should stretch out his arm to you. You were conceived in sin, and stained in your very birth, and there is, therefore, nothing here that could move the heart of deity.

3. Nor was there anything in this child's *beauty*, for it was loathsome. Men are often affected by beauty. Doubtless Pharaoh's daughter preserved Moses because he was a comely child. We know that Ahasuerus chose Esther because of her beauty; and there have been many that have been exalted in the world for their personal attractions; but it was not so with man in God's sight. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." We are not only sinners, but *sin* itself. How then can sin attract the regard and love of a perfectly holy God. There may be much in us that can make our fellow creatures esteem us, there can be nothing in us as fallen, condemned, ungodly, that can make God esteem us. I know that you who are spiritually taught, will join with me in singing:

> "What was there in us to merit esteem,
> Or give the Creator delight?
> 'Twas even so, Father, we ever must sing,
> For so it seemed good in thy sight."

See then, sinner, thou art without form or comeliness, and thou hast no beauty that He should desire thee. What can there be in a worm to gratify the Almighty? The heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly. How much less, then, should there be any beauty in man, that is but a worm, or in the son of man, that is crushed before the moth. Think not that he needs thy beauty to excite his love. He can love thee though deformed, and love thee till he hath made thee comely by his comeliness, which he shall put upon thee.

4. Furthermore, as we have found no motive yet, either in necessity or the child's birth or beauty, so we find none in any *entreaties* that were uttered by this child. It doth not seem that it pleaded with the passer-by to save it, for it could not as yet speak. So, though sinners do pray, yet when a sinner prays, it is because God has begun to save him. A sinner's prayers can never be the cause of his salvation, for, mark you, the truth is that no man ever seeks God first, God has first sought him, and

began a good work in his soul, before he ever turns to God. In some cases, this is very extraordinarily proved. The old writers used to quote the instance of a man who went into a wood, having been an outrageous sinner, with the determination of destroying himself, and while he adjusted the rope, some passer-by hearing a sound, came and expostulated with him, and the words were blessed to his salvation. Is there any preparation or preparatory process in a man who has come to such a pitch of sin, that he is about to take away his own life, to wash his hands in his own blood? Surely this was grace. There were one or two cases in Whitfield's history, of men who came into places where he was preaching, with stones in their pockets to pelt him with, but who became themselves converted. Was there anything there for the grace of God to get a hold of, anything to foster, to favour, to nourish the grace, the sovereign grace of the Most High? Nay, rather, while they were yet without anything whatsoever that could have cried after God, he was found of them that sought him not; he called them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved. I know some think that the sinner takes the first step, but we know better. If he did, it were like the old Romish miracle of St. Dennis, where we are told that after his head was off, he picked it up and walked two thousand miles with it in his hand. Whereupon, some wit observed that he did not see any wonder in the man's walking two thousand miles, for all the difficulty lay in the first step. Just so, I see no difficulty in a man's getting all the way to heaven, if he can but take the first step; for all the miracle lies in that first step, the making the dead soul live, the melting of the adamantine heart, the thawing of the northern ice, the bringing down of the proud look; this is the work, this is the difficulty; and if man can do that himself, verily, he can do the whole. But, when God looketh upon men to save them, it is not because they cry to him, for they never do and never will cry until the work of salvation is begun. They are unwilling and unable to use any entreaty or persuasion that could be cogent to the heart of God; for rather, they abhor the mercy; they run away from the grace which is offered to them; they reject the gospel when it is preached; they will not come to Christ that they may have life, but they wilfully and wickedly turn their backs upon the Most High, and until he by his strong hand bringeth them to Christ, saved they will never be. O grace, O grace, how wide thy sphere! How glorious art thou in meeting the degradation and the sin of man! Thou showest the splendour of thy power in beginning, carrying on, and finishing the work.

5. Yet, further, brethren, it does not appear that the pity of the passer-by was shown upon this child because of any *future service* which was expected of it. This child, it seems, was nourished, clothed, luxuriously decorated; and yet, after all that, if you read the chapter through, you will find it went astray from Him who had set his heart upon it. The Lord foresaw this, and yet loved that child notwithstanding. God knew that you and I, though he loved us when there was nothing good in us, after we were saved should still rebel. He knew that we had backsliding hearts. He knew that we should be unbelieving even to the end, but he loved us notwithstanding all. He did not love *you* because

he foresaw you would be a preacher; nor *you* because he knew you would be a tract distributor; nor *you* because he knew that you would be an indefatigable Sunday-school teacher; he loved you although he knew that you would be as you are to-day, ungrateful and unkind to him; cold in your soul, worldly in your spirit. You can to-day, rehearse experimentally, our last Sabbath's text, "I was as a beast before thee: Nevertheless I am continually with thee."

There was, then, no motive of future service why this child should be blessed, or why God should save man. I do not know—I want to say what I cannot say this morning; I want to exhibit to you *man*, standing as a criminal at the bar, guilty, proved to be guilty even to his very face, yet proudly saying that he is not guilty. A traitor at heart, a base rebel, an ungrateful wretch! I want you to think of him as one upon whom pity seems as if it would be thrown away, not an object for mercy, one of whom the universe cries, "Away with him, away with him, it is not fit that he should live," and then, I want to show you God in the sovereignty of his grace, saying, "I *will* spare that traitor; he deserves to die, but I will spare him; I have no motive for it, except such as is in my own will. There is nothing in him, no reason in him why I should spare him, but I *will* spare him; I *will* prove that I am king for ever and ever, and the God and Lord of mercy."

The only answer that we can give to the question, "Why then, does God spare this outcast infant?" is this, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." How is Jehovah exalted in our midst this morning! My spirit trembles while it labours to exalt the Lord alone. The Lord is King for ever and ever, hallelujah! Bow your heads, both saints and sinners, and adore him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Ask not questions, for he giveth no account of his matters. Quarrel not with his dominion, for his answer is to thee, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Impeach not his justice, or his justice you shall feel in smiting you. Entreat his mercy, but entreat it as those that have no claim upon him. Ask him for it as knowing that if he gives it to you he has a right to give it or to withhold it if he will. Sinners, behold yourselves this morning, in the hand of an angry God. There you lie before God, like a moth beneath your own fingers. It is as he wills, to save or to destroy you. Are ye at ease? Will ye mock him? Will ye boast and glorify yourselves? Rather, as creatures that are now absolutely under his control, and deservedly subject to his rod, bow your heads and cry, "God be merciful to us, sinners! Thou canst save, do it for thine own will and glory's sake, that thy mercy may be magnified and thy sovereignty may be clearly seen."

We have found no motive in the creature, and therefore, we refrain from further search, believing that the fountain and wellspring of mercy is in God himself. Into *his* reasons we cannot search, lest like Job, we should hear the rebuke of the Lord, "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depth?"

III. But now, we turn to consider THE MANDATE OF HIS MERCY. "I said unto thee, Live."

First, I want you to notice that this fiat of God is *majestic*. "I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *Live;* yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *Live*." Darkness was upon the face of the earth, and thus the Almighty spoke, "Let there be light!" And light was. Sublime because simple; without any oratorical embellishments, magnificently stern; God speaks, and it is done. So, in our text, we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath; but the majestic One passes by; he is making a tour of his dominions, splendidly arrayed, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels at his beck and call. He looks, and there lies an infant, loathsome, in its blood, he stops, and he pronounces the word, the royal word "Live." There speaks a God. Who but he could venture thus to deal with life and dispense it with a single syllable? 'Tis majestic, 'tis divine! And mark you, brethren, though the word preached by us may be very rough and rugged, as we confess it is, though we know but little of the graces of oratory, yet when God speaks by a minister, there is nothing more divine under heaven, nor in heaven, than the gospel. When the Lord speaks, even though it be by the unlettered and the ignorant, when through the gospel he saith, "Live," to a sinner, not even the angels who bow before the throne ever heard a diviner sound. Thus saith the Lord, thou dead sinner, "*Live!*"

Again, this fiat is *manifold* as well as majestic. When He saith, "Live," it includeth many things. Here is *judicial* life. The sinner is ready to be condemned and executed; his neck is on the block, and the axe is gleaming in the sunlight, but the mighty One saith, "Live," and he riseth pardoned and absolved. The execution is not only stayed, that were but respite; the crime is forgiven, the man is to live for aye!

It is, moreover, *spiritual* life. The man knew nought of God, his eyes could not see Christ, his ears could not hear his voice; Jehovah said, "Live," and spiritual life was given, and we were quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Moreover, it includes glory-life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. "I said unto thee, *Live;*" and that word rolls on through all the years of life till death comes, and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord's voice is still heard, "I say unto thee, Live!" In the morning of the resurrection it is that selfsame voice which is echoed by the archangel, "Live," and as the spirits rise to heaven to be blest for ever in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same voice, "I say unto thee, Live."

Note again, that it is an *irresistible* voice. When God says to a sinner, "Live," all the devils in hell cannot keep him in the grave. If the Lord should say to a blasphemer here to-day, "Live," that blasphemer *must* become a saint. Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A strong hand might seize the bridle of his charger and throw him to the ground; but Saul is not to be stopped like this; he will rise from the ground the same Saul, to go to Damascus as blood-thirsty as ever. But see what divine grace can do! A voice from heaven and a light above the brightness of the sun, and Saul is crying out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Within three

days he is baptized; he becomes a preacher; and Saul that was called Paul becomes a leader in the hosts of the Most High. My Master can do the like to-day. Mighty to save is he.

"Tell what his arm hath done,
What spoils from death he won,
Praise his dear name alone.
Worthy the Lamb."

We remark again, that it is *all-sufficient*. "Live," dost thou say, great God? Why, the man is dead! There is life—not in him, but in the voice that bids him live. "Live," dost thou say? "By this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days!" There is power—not in his corruption, but in the voice that crieth, "Come forth!" When we preach to sinners and tell them to believe in Christ, do not fancy it is because we think they have any power. No, but because when in God's name we say, "Believe," the power is in the mandate as it comes from our lip, uttered by the Most High. If a minister be not filled with God's Spirit, then is his ministry an empty dream; but if a minister be, as I conceive him to be, a man who speaks in God's name, and for the time being, is the very mouth of God to men's soul's, then there is power in the gospel as it is preached, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, to do for the sinner what he can by no means do for himself. I cry to-day in my Master's name "Thus saith the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall live." Trust my Master bleeding on the tree, and ye shall be delivered. Rest ye on the merit of his blood and of his glorious righteousness; trust ye in the power of his intercession before the throne, and despite your lost estate, you shall be this morning saved for ever and ever.

We close when we shall have repeated ourselves once more by saying, this mandate was a mandate of *free grace*. I want to lay that down again, and again, and again, that there was nothing in this infant, nothing but loathsomeness, nothing therefore, to merit esteem; nothing in the infant but inability, nothing therefore, by which it could help itself; nothing in it but infancy, nothing therefore, by which it could plead for itself, and yet grace said, "Live"—freely, without any bribe, without any entreaty, said, "Live;" and so when sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God *will* do it, to magnify his free, unpurchased, unsought grace. Surely this is a subject which will suit some here, though it will not please others. Proud Pharisees will turn on their heels. "That is very high Calvinistic doctrine," saith one. My dear friends, I do not care what it is; I know it is written in the Word of God. I preach very often sermons which get me the title of Arminian, and just as often I am charged with Hyperism. I am simply one who seeks honestly to tell you what he believes to be in Scripture, and what he believes to be true, and therefore, whether it be high or low is nothing to me. Is it true? I know the proud Pharisee will say, "No." "Why," saith he, "there must be some merit in what we do? Surely we do something. Perseverance in well-doing, and so on, surely this will effect much?" You are under the law and not under grace. You have not yet learned the A B C of the gospel, you want to be a saint by the merit

of what you do, and you will be lost as sure as you are a man unless you look at things in a different light. But I know that the doctrine will be acceptable to those condemned ones here this morning, who have written their own sentence out, who say, "I must perish, I have nothing to bring thee, O Lord; I have not even a tender heart, I have not even such a sense of need as I want; Lord, I am empty, except that I am full of evil and full of sin, I have nothing that I could put before thine eye, except that which would excite thy wrath and thy disgust. Great God, if thou shouldest not save me I cannot blame thee; I lay hold of nothing in myself, but thou hast said, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, hath everlasting life." Lord, I venture to believe on him; thou wilt be true, thou wilt save even me." Soul, soul, thou mayest go out of this house light of heart and foot, for "thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." In God's name I pronounce the sentence of absolution on thee, if thou hast thus come to Christ, and trusted in the Lord Jesus. There is not a sentence left in God's Book against thee; thou art no more dead, but thou livest; no more accursed, but beloved; no more loathsome, but beautiful—covered with Christ's righteousness, and filled with the Spirit of the living God. What shall I say to you who are Christians, but this—do for the sake of this grace—show your gratitude, live more like your Master, and live more in God's service. Seek to spend and be spent in him. Nothing can make a man work for Christ like free grace; and those who believe the doctrine of free grace and yet are idle, must surely hold the truth in unrighteousness, for there is no principle so active, so impulsive as this.

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I'd burn:
Chosen of thee ere time began,
I'd choose thee in return."

Finally, Christian, never give up any sinner. Never think that any man is beyond salvation. I charge you by the solemn thought that God looketh for nothing in man, and saveth only according to the sweet counsels of his own will, bring every man you meet with before God in prayer, plead with every man, preach Christ to every man, tell every man that Christ can save, tell that sinner that whatever there may not be in him, Christ's power is still the same, that *his* arm is not shortened neither is *his* ear heavy; and spread ye the glad news that it is not of the will of man, nor blood, nor birth, but by the power of the Spirit of God according to the will of the Most High. May the Lord add his blessing and do some of his mighty works this morning through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT MEANEST THOU, O SLEEPER?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."—Jonah i. 5, 6.

OF all the men in the ship, Jonah was the person who ought most to have been awake; but nevertheless, he was not only asleep, but *fast* asleep; all the creaking of the cordage, the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, the straining of the timbers, and the shouting of the mariners, did not arouse him; he was fast locked in the arms of sleep. See here, in Jonah's heavy slumber, the effect of sin. No noxious drug can give such deadly sleep as sin. The body never knows so dread a sleep when under the influence of opiates, as the soul does when sin hath cast it into a slumber. If men could be awake to the evils, to the danger, to the desperate punishment of sin, sin were not half so deadly as it is; but when it puts its sweet cup of nightshade to the lip, that cup soon blinds the eye and "steeps the senses in forgetfulness," and man knoweth not what or where he is. Nor is sin the only cradle in which evil rocks the soul, the world too, casteth men into slumber. I do not know that Jonah ever slept so soundly anywhere as when he had gotten into the midst of busy mariners who were going to Tars hish. Ah, it is comparatively easy for us to keep awake in the midst of God's Church; 'tis easy for us to maintain our stedfastness and integrity when we meet with those who rejoice in His name; but the world is an enchanted ground, and happy is that Christian who is able to survive the deadening influence of business, the soporific influence which creeps over the minds of men whose merchandize increaseth, whose houses are filled with the riches of nations. What downy pillows doth the world sew to all armholes! What beds of ease she spreads for those whom she entraps.

See also, the slumbering effects of the flesh. It was to spare himself a little toil, it was to avoid personal dishonour that Jonah fled. Ah, flesh! when thou art yielded to, into what follies wilt thou not drive us, into what prostration of strength dost thou not hurl us? Pleasures and comforts, if sought as ends, are desperate drains upon the vigour of

the spirit. When the body is indulged, then the soul lies cleaving to the dust. It is not possible for us to pamper the flesh without, at the same time starving the soul. If we sacrifice unto our own lusts, we are quite certain to get the sacrifices by robbing God's altar. The body shall not have pleasure in sin, except the soul shall soon be in a state of misery and decay.

See also, in our text, one of the devices of Satan. He seeks to lull God's prophets into slumber, for he knows that dumb dogs that are given to sleep will never do any very great injury to his cause. The wakeful watchman he always fears, for then he cannot take the city by surprise; but if he can cast God's watchman into slumber, then he is well content, and thinketh it almost as well to have a Christian asleep as to have him dead: he would certainly sooner see him in hell, but next to that, he is most glad to see him rocked in the cradle of presumption, fast asleep. May we be delivered from Jonah's condition; but since like Jonah, we are infested by sin, incumbered by the flesh, surrounded by the world, and tempted by the devil, we have good cause occasionally that the shipmaster should come round and shake us by the shoulders, or even roughly strike us with the rope, lest we should sleep as do others, and so fall into spiritual decays.

I shall this morning act the shipmaster's part, and, as captain of this vessel, I will cry both to *slumbering saints* and to *sleepy sinners*, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God."

I. First of all, we will deal with the SLEEPING SAINTS—those poor Jonahs who are God's true servants, but are yet asleep.

To break their bands of sleep asunder, let me remind them, first, that *the ship is in danger*. It was ill for Jonah to sleep when all hands were at the pumps. When every other man was doing his best to lighten the ship, and save her if possible from the terrific tempest, it was a shame that he should be asleep. The peril of human life demanded of every generous spirit prompt and earnest action. Every groaning timber would upraid the lazy, sleepy prophet. Member of this Church, professed Christian, is it not a shame, think you, to be slumbering, to be dilatory in your Master's service when the souls of men are in danger? It is marvellous to me how men can be so careless about the ruin of men's souls. Let us hear the cry of "Fire! fire!" in the streets, and our heart is all in trepidation lest some poor creature should be burned alive; but we read of hell, and of the wrath to come, and seldom do our hearts palpitate with any compassionate trembling and fear. If we are on board a vessel, and the shrill cry is heard, "A man overboard!" whoever hears of a passenger wrapping his plaid around him, and lying down upon a seat to contemplate the exertions of others? But in the Church, when we hear of thousands of sinners sinking in the floods of ruin, we behold professed Christians wrapping themselves up in their own security, and calmly looking on upon the labours of others, wishing them no doubt all success, but not even lifting a finger to do any part of the work themselves. If we heard to-morrow in our streets the awful cry—more terrible than fire—the cry of "Bread! bread! bread!" and saw starving women lifting up their perishing children, or hungry men imprecating

curses upon those who should keep back their necessary food from them, would we not empty out our stores? Who among us would not spend our substance to let the poor ravenous creatures satisfy the pangs of hunger? And yet, here is the world perishing for lack of knowledge. Here we have them at our doors crying for the bread of heaven, and how many there are that hoard their substance for avarice, give their time to vanity, devote their talents to self-aggrandisement, and centre their thoughts only on the world or the flesh! Oh! could ye once see with your eyes a soul sinking into hell, it were such a spectacle that ye would work night and day, and count your life too short and your hours too few for the plucking of brands from the burning. I suppose if we had once seen a drowning man, or a wretch borne over the rapids of Niagara, or if we had seen a person stabbed in the street, we should scarce ever forget it. Death's doings are painted in very red colours upon the memory. O that God would give some of you the sight of a lost soul! O that you could see it in its naked condition when it steps behind the curtain into the world unknown. O that you could behold its first horrors, when it discovers itself exposed to the anger of Almighty God. Would that you could see that soul when the awful hell-sweat shall stand upon its brow as God proclaims—"Depart, thou cursed one!" O that the vision of hell were sometimes before our eyes, that some few of the sighs of a damned soul were ringing in our ears! Would God we had a vision of the judgment, the tremendous crowd, the flaming heavens and the rocking earth, the open book, the eyes that flash with lightning and the voice that speaks with thunder! Would that we could see the crowds as they descend into the pit that hath no bottom; for then' starting up like men that have long been given to a foolish slumber, we should gird up our loins, and using both our hands we should seek to pluck men from the burning, and deliver them from going down into the pit. Men are dying! Men are perishing! Hell is filling! Satan is triumphing! Poor souls are howling in their agonies, and do ye sleep? I, as the shipmaster, shake ye yet again. O that the Holy Spirit may quicken and arouse you, perhaps he may do it through my voice, while again I adjure you. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God," that the multitudes perish not!

A second time I would arouse you, by reminding you that in the halcyon times in which we live, men are earnestly craving for our prayers —*men are longing for deliverance.* In Jonah's ship every man was a pleader; every person was praying; and though I cannot say this of the world that lieth in the wicked one, yet, to a very great extent, it is true that the masses are longing to hear the words of this life. There was never an age like this for hearing sermons. I marvel, every Sabbath day, as I see the crowd willing to stand outside waiting by the hour, and then rushing in like a mountain torrent, even treading upon one another to hear the Word. Is not this an encouragement to labour? See the theatre on a Sunday; no actors could attract greater multitudes! How they throng the doors, to listen to some simple-minded man, who is going to tell the story of the cross! I have seen this thirst for the Word all over England; but this present week I have seen in a village, thinly populated, some ten thousand people crowding the drinking cliffs,

in every word from the preacher's lips—earnest to listen to the message of mercy. We have not now to stir up the people to attend the means, for there is all around us a desire to hear. This is a hearing age; this is a time when men are willing to listen—when they are only too glad to hear the Word faithfully preached. I say not that it is so in every place, but certainly it is in London; and a man with but very moderate gifts, if his tongue be but on fire, will soon command an audience. If there be an empty place of worship in London, it is generally the preacher's fault; and, in nine cases out of ten, you will find that empty benches are evidences that the man does not preach the gospel; for, if he preached the gospel, the people would soon throng to listen to him. What, shall we sleep now? What, shall we be idle *now?* Ministers of Christ, shall we relax our efforts, or shall we be dull and cold about immortal souls when every omen urges us to zealous labour? My fellow workers—deacons and elders, honoured Church officers—will you draw back in this day of hopefulness, and refrain to sow sow the seed, when the field is ploughed and ready for the grain? Church members—ye young men that can speak in public, ye women that can in your households talk of Christ—will any of you be dull and lethargic *now?* Now is the moment when we may carry the fortress by storm; and if armed and carrying bows we turn our backs in the moment of victory, when triumph trembles in the scales, how shall we throughout life regret our wicked folly and idleness. What meanest thou, O sleeper, to sleep *now?* Arise, for 'tis a happy and auspicious hour—"Arise, and call upon thy God."

Yet further, let us remember that as Jonah was the only man in the ship whose prayer could be of any avail, so *the children of God are the only men who can do any real spiritual service to the perishing world.* All the cries of the shipmaster and his crew were addressed to the gods of their various countries, who had ears which could not ear, and hands which could afford no aid. Jonah was the only man who worshipped the Lord that made the sea and the dry land; hence, his prayers alone could save the ship. Now, the salvation of the world under God lies with the *Church.* Christ has finished the atonement; it is for the Church to finish the ingathering. Christ hath paid the purchase-price, and completed redemption by blood; it is for the Church to seek the Holy Spirit, and fully to redeem the world by power. Suppose, then, that you who fear God say, "This is no case of mine; I am not my brother's keeper;" suppose that you waste opportunities, and throw precious time to the dogs, then the world must go down to its awful doom; but, mark you, its blood shall be upon your skirts. This generation, under God, must have salvation given to it through our ministry, through our evangelists, through our Sunday-schools, through our missionaries, through our preachings and teachings; and if we do it not, the world will not stay from perishing while we are staying from labouring. Men will not live on until another generation worthier than we are shall have taken our places; but this generation must go down to the tomb, muttering curses between its lips against the faithless, wicked, unbelieving, inactive Church; and we must go down too, to meet the doom of those who had no real faith in Christ, or else they would have

had a love for the souls of men; who had not the spirit of Jesus, or else they would with wooing entreaties, and with earnest efforts have brought men to the cross of Christ. Ah, beloved! I know that we have some in the Church who are but a drag to it. There are some in all Churches who are of this kind, but let me solemnly remind you—we must address the Church as a body—let me again remind the Church that it is with her and with no one else that the world has to deal as to its conversion. We must never think of leaving Christ's work to societies. They have had their day, and have supplied a great lack created by the loss of the apostolic spirit, but it is now time that the aroused and revived Church should assume her true position and do her own work. Fifty years or more, missionary societies have been trying to convert the world, and albeit that many souls have been saved, and therefore the effort has been far from useless, yet, compared with apostolic success, they have been a miserable failure. All these years we have spent ten times the money, with not a tenth of the success, of early evangelistic effort. In my inmost soul, I believe that the Lord is not with the most of our foreign missions. And why? Because God never called the missionary societies to the work. He never bade the missionary society become the spouse of Christ, and bring forth sons unto him. His offspring, his seed which shall reward him for his soul's travail, must spring from his own well-beloved bride. Much as I value all good societies, I cannot hesitate to declare that the Church is the ordained agent, and that all beside is human, and derives authority only from man. Hence I say of a society for the conversion of the heathen, it is a man-constituted body, and not of God. The Lord will work, not by committees, but by his Churches. The Church must do her own work, and when all our Churches are thoroughly aroused to this fact, and every congregation shall send out its own men, pray for their own men, and support their own men, we shall see greater things than we have ever dreamed of, and "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." But it lies with the Church. O ye that are in the Church and sleep, what mean ye? Arise, and call upon your God.

Further, and here I more especially address such members of this Church as may have been hitherto careless about the good work. Remember, sleeper, that *you are in the ship yourself*, that you enjoy its privileges, and therefore, you ought to take your quota of the work. It is said of Lepidus, a Roman officer, that one day, when all the soldiers were at drill, he laid down out of the sunshine, and said, he wished it were all the duty of a soldier to lay under a tree for ever. We have some such soldiers. The breed is not extinct. The enlisting officer, however exact he may be, cannot help it, there will be some such introduced into all our little armies, who like to lie in the shade, and take matters easy, and wish this were all that ever a Christian soldier had to do. Oh, rise, man! for if the battle is to be won, it must not be fought by soldiers lying in the shade, but by men who can bear the heat of the sun, wear their heavy armour without weariness, and rush to battle against the foe for God and for the truth, fearless and dauntless, in the face of leaguered hosts. There is an old story told

of Philip, the last king of Macedon. Before the last disastrous battle by which his monarchy was destroyed, it is said that he stood up to harangue his soldiers upon a sepulchre, and it was interpreted by the augurs to be a sign of sure defeat, because he stood upon a tomb to speak. And I, your minister, if it should ever be my unhappy lot to stand upon a dead Church to preach the Word, cannot expect anything but the most disastrous defeat. Let but the minister of God be supported by a living Church, let him be borne up in the arms of a loving and a praying people, and who can stand against his word? Nothing but victory must follow. But let us have dead, careless deacons and elders, let us have idle Church-members, and the omens are against us, and the result of our battle must be a terrible calamity. There is more than we think for of mischief done by the presence of one unconverted person in a Church. We are told by anatomists, that there is no part of the body which is dead. Even the teeth and bones are alive. Life abhors alliance with death; and if a dead substance once gets into the body, all the efforts of nature are directed to the one point where the foreign body is found, to drive it out; and often ulcers and running sores, and such like things, are but the effects of nature seeking to expel the dead substance from the body. Now, there is nothing in Christ's real Church that is dead; and if ever dead substances get into the Church, they will not lie there still and quiet, but the Church shall be aware of it in her every nerve and pore, and she shall soon begin to exert her strength and vitality to expel the foreign substance from her living body—would that this energy could be spared for other works, for the saving of souls for Jesus.

Now, I address some pretended Christians here who are not alive to God. Let me beg of them to relinquish their profession, or if not, to make it real. Either be what you profess to be, or drop your profession. Lie not unto God, for in so doing you injure the Church of which you are a part, and, which since you are a part of it, it is your duty to serve. I should not expect if I were a member of a commercial firm, to take half the profits, and to do nothing. It is mean to the very last degree to share the benefits without uniting in the toil. And yet some professors are guilty of this miserable conduct. As it was in the days of Job, so it is even until now—"the oxen were ploughing, and the asses were feeding beside them;" there is always a large proportion of the latter class in the Churches, too glad to feed, but quite unwilling to work. To every Jonah, then, I say, "either arise and pray with us or get out of the ship, for sooner or later we shall be compelled to throw you out if you do not."

Furthermore, and here let me conclude this point, *the honour of our God is mightily concerned in every Jonah being aroused.* How could Jehovah be glorified, if the only worshipper of Jehovah in the vessel should sleep? If he did not cry to God, how could the mariners know whether Jehovah did hear prayer or not? Now, mark you, the honour of Christ—of his doctrines, of his blood, of his person, the dignity of everything that we hold sacred—rests, in the eyes of the sons of men, in the keeping of the Church. When a Church grows proud, worldly, and idle, what does the world say? "That's your religion!" says the world;

and then, "Aha! aha! aha!" it says, "what a lie religion is!" But let the world see a really earnest Church, it grows very angry, it finds all the fault it can; but down, deep in its heart, it reverences those it hates, and it secretly confesses, "There is a power here." They gaze and admire, even though they hate the might with which God surrounds such a Church as this. The Christian religion was at one time looked up to by the heathens with awe and reverence, for they saw its martyrs dying without a tear; its poor content in their poverty, without murmuring: its great men humble, not giving way either to lust or covetousness; they saw the purity and chastity of Christian matrons; they beheld the diligent industry of Christian bishops; they saw as though they beheld the face of an angel, when they looked upon Christ's fair Church on earth. But she became degenerate—she committed fornication by being allied with the State; she lost her dignity, and turned aside from her high position as queen of the Lord, and a spiritual body quickened by a spirit from above. What then did the world do? It mocked and jeered; and while it paid an outward homage to a bejewelled Church glittering with gold and silver, yet in its soul it loathed and despised her. Men no longer needed to dread the omnipotence of Christian zeal. An excellent historian thus speaks of believers in the martyr age—hear it, and judge whether men have such reasons to fear us now. He describes the common opinion of the Roman pagans concerning the followers of Jesus: "They were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen they were at work. Every member was a missionary of the sect, and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die. Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspected channels. Like a contagion propagated in the air, it could penetrate, as it seemed, anywhere, everywhere. The meek and gentle slave that tends your children, or attends you at table, may be a Christian; the favourite daughter of your house, who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian; the captain of the guards, the legislator in the senate-house, may be a Christian! In these circumstances who or what is safe? What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome, and the peace of domestic life, against an enemy like this? Then it was often as hateful for its absence as for its presence. With sullen moroseness this strange people studiously absented themselves from all places and scenes of public entertainment and festivity. Games, shows, gladiatorial contests, public fêtes of every kind, military or civil, they eschewed as they would have done the plague. Such scenes, forsooth, were so mixed up with idolatry, and so steeped in licentiousness and sin, that though consecrated by the presence and express sanction of their country's gods, they were not good enough for them!" O my brethren, how I wish that *we* could be thus happily reviled. If we cannot reach so high, at least, let us keep our garments spotless.

Would you make this Church, my fellow members, to become a stink in the nostrils of the wicked? We have, brethren, a power among men. When they have followed us with their hootings and their jeers, we have borne patiently, and have been too glad to bear every slander if

we might arouse a lazy generation from their lethargy. We have seen success follow our efforts. We have beheld the opening of places for the preaching of the gospel which had been closed for centuries. We have seen the theatre devoted to God on the Sabbath-day—and *now, now*, shall we stay in our course? God forbid! for, if we do, what shall the enemy say, but, "Lo! God hath forsaken them, the gospel can but create a temporary excitement, truth is evanescent in its influence." Instead thereof, let us hold hard to God and to his Word, for the glory of the truth, and for the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, I hear some self-satisfied people say, "*We* do not want this sermon this morning; *we* are not asleep. The members of this Church are not a slothful people." Well, dear friends, I cheerfully admit that, as a body, we are not given to slumber, but I am not so sure that this is true of you all. At any rate, those who are awake will find it a good thing to have a jog, lest they should unawares fall like Eutychus into a sleep; but I am sure that some of you are asleep, and I shall not hesitate to treat you as such. But you will reply to me, "Why, sir, we *talk* about religion." Many people talk in their sleep. I have heard of a man who preached an excellent sermon when he was asleep. "Well, but is not our *walk* consistent?" Yes, but when I was a small boy, I used to walk in my sleep, and then I could venture in my sleep where I should not have wandered when I was awake, and I should not wonder but this may be your case. "Yes, but do we not feel religious influences? Do we not *weep* under a sermon?" Yes, and I have heard people cry in their sleep. Such things are quite possible. "But do we not *rejoice* very much when we hear the gospel?" Yes, and some folks will laugh in their sleep. John Bunyan tells of Mercy, who did laugh because of the beauty of her dream; and your dreams may be so pleasant that they make you laugh. "Ah, well," says one, "but I do not see that we are so very sound asleep, for we *think* a great deal about religion." Yes, and people think when they are asleep; for what are their dreams but unconnected thoughts? and so you may have some straying thoughts of God and of right, and yet after all you may be fast asleep. "Then, what do you mean by a man's being really awake?" I mean two or three things. I mean, first, his having a thorough consciousness of the reality of spiritual things. When I speak of a wakeful man, I mean one who does not take the soul to be a fancy, nor heaven to be a fiction, nor hell to be a tale, but who acts among the sons of men as though these were the only substances, and all other things the shadows. I want men of stern resolution, for no Christian is awake unless he stedfastly determines to serve his God, come fair, come foul. I would have you, young Christians, dedicated to God's service. Just as Hamilcar led his two children to the altar, and made them swear by the gods that they would never cease their enmity to Rome while they lived, I want you to feel that the vows of God are upon you, so that you cannot cease from attacking sin and winning souls as long as you live.

And I do not think you are awake, moreover, unless you are moved by a passionate earnestness to win souls for Christ. A man who labours, and sees no success attending his efforts, may be awake if he mourns, and groans,

and sighs before God; but an idle preacher, a preacher without converts—a Sunday school teacher in whose class there is no conversion—a man who never saw a sinner brought to Christ by his means, and yet is happy and content—such a man is asleep; let him take heed that he sleep not the sleep of death. I had sooner the Lord would send claps of thunder to this Church, in the form of heavy trials and troubles—the removal of your pastor, the taking away of our best men, the riot of mobs, or the slander of the press—than that we should continue to multiply and increase, and should make this place a huge dormitory wherein we snored out God's praises in our sleep, instead of an armoury where we sharpen our swords on the Sabbath to go out the whole week long, contending for God and for the good of men. Never may these benches be beds, nor these seats couches for sluggards to recline upon. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God."

I have now said enough, I hope, to the slumbering Christians, only that there are some who are asleep who will not hear what I say. I do not mean that there are any in the congregation asleep with their eyes shut; but if they are asleep with their hearts, it is probable that what I say may do good to those who are awake; but those who are asleep and given to slumber, will say, "A little more rest and a little more folding of arms; we are saved ourselves, let us sleep on." May the Lord vouch safe you a better mind, and constrain you to act as holy gratitude and love demand of you.

II. Very solemnly and earnestly would I now address myself to SLUMBERING SINNERS.

What crowds are there, this morning, of these careless ones, who are at ease on the brink of ruin. Unconverted and yet unconcerned; exposed to the wrath of God, but fearless, as though all were peace; on the edge of perdition, but merry as a marriage bell; condemned already, but mirthful as revellers at a feast.

Let me attempt to disturb your quiet, by remarking, *first*, that *your sleep is utterly incomprehensible to those who are awake.* Convinced souls, who feel the danger of their own state, cannot understand how you can be so careless. We were as foolish as you are once, but when we first began to perceive things in their true light, it was the wonder of wonders to us how we could have been so much at ease in so perilous a position. The man who sports upon the gallows, or laughs when consuming in the fire, or jests with his head upon the block, is not more a marvel than you.

You are *a sinner*—a sinner! You can hear that title applied to you without any sort of fear, whereas a sinner is a thing abhorred of God. The God that made thee loathes thee. The sinner is one whom God *must* smite. He bears with thee long, but he *must* smite thee soon. The sword may sleep in its scabbard, but it *must* leap forth to smite thee even to the death. *A sinner!* Why, thou art one whose life is a continued miracle, for the heavens would fall upon thee, if long-suffering did not restrain them; the very stones of the field would smite thee, if God did not bind them over to keep the peace; and the beasts of the field are in league against thee, and would devour thee if he did not hold them in from thee. Why, thou art one that has no friend anywhere;

thou art a blot upon nature; thou art a dishonour to creation; thou art loathsome in thyself; thou art contagious to others; thou art grievous to the best of men; thou art harmful even to the bad; thou art a weed ripening for the burning, a pool of foul waters breeding miasma, a monster to be hunted out of the universe of God. A felon, a criminal, a traitor, *a sinner*, which is all these things in one, and yet, under such an accusation, thou art at ease! Man, remember again, thou art *a mortal*. Time eats away thy life and hurries thee to thy grave. The sun doth not stand still for thee; speeding on his everlasting course, day after day, bears thee to the tomb. Every tick of yonder clock, sounds as the footfall of approaching Death. The rider upon the pale horse is pursuing thee, his charger is foaming with speed. Perhaps thou mayest never see another day; the light of 1863 may never shine into thine eyes; or, if thou shouldst not yet expire, how short is the longest life! how certain is thy death! A mortal man, and yet thou sleepest! Bethink thee, man, of that upper chamber where thou shalt play the leading part, pale and languid, stretched out upon the bed. The curtains shall be drawn about thee, and every voice shall be hushed in sad anxiety; weeping relatives shall gaze upon thy brow, clammy with the death-sweat, and life shall be a thing of seconds with thee. Heavily heave the lungs, languidly beats the pulse; the awful moment is at hand. It is yourself, you strong man, grappling with a stronger than you are. Those are *your* eyes which shall be glazed in the darkness of death, and those are your limbs which shall be gathered up in the last mortal agony. And do you, knowing, feeling that you must die, and having the sentence of death in your members already—do you sleep still? Alas! alas! how dire the stupor which death cannot startle. But, man, remember you are *an immortal*, and this makes it the more grievous that you should sleep. You shall not die when you die, but you shall live again for ever! for ever! for ever! Oh, eternity! eternity! a deep without a bottom and without a shore! My hearer, thou must sail over it for ever and for ever, never reaching a port; and that eternity must be to thee, if unsaved, a sea of fire, lashed to eternal storm. Eternity, eternity, thou mountain without a summit! Up its sides thou must climb, O sinner, and find it an ever-burning volcano. On, on, on, must thou ascend, for summit there is none—for ever! for ever! for ever! for ever! And yet dost thou sleep on, sinner? What madness do I see in you? It is madness without method, insanity exaggerated, to despise the warnings of eternity. Remember, man, as thou art immortal, there is *a heaven*, and dying as thou are living, thou wilt lose it. For thee no harps of angels, no songs of saints, no melodies of joy; for thee no face of Christ to be seen with rapture, no embraces of the ever-loving husband; for thee no sunshines of the father's face, no bliss ineffable, no rivers of pleasure at his right hand. Thou art losing all these! Eternal and exceeding weights of glory thou art spurning, and yet thou sleepest! O sleeper, what meanest thou? If this bestir thee not, I would have thee remember, man, as surely as thou losest heaven, so certainly thou are gaining *hell*. For thee the flames that never can be quenched, the thirst without a drop of water; for thee an angry God, a fiery law, a

flaming Tophet; for thee the company of blaspheming fiends and despairing spirits; for thee unutterable agony, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "What meanest thou, O sleeper," when this must be thy doom if thou sleep on. Were it not that we know that man is dead in trespasses and sins, this sleeping would be utterly incomprehensible to those who have once been awakened. I marvel that I can preach about these awful themes without an agony of earnestness. These are no trifles, no themes for an orator's idle hour, or a hearer's curious ear. These matters may well make both the ears of him that heareth thereof to tingle. O that they might make your hearts tremble before the Lord, that with contrition you might seek his face.

Further would I press this matter home. I am sure that *you* frivolous, thoughtless men and women, *can give no justifiable cause for carelessness.* Sinner, wherefore sleepest thou? Perhaps you tell me you do not believe there is this danger; I reply to you, you *do* believe it, you know you do. I reason not with you if you pretend to be infidels; there is that in you which makes you know that there is a God, and that he must punish sin; you may boast that you have no fears of the hereafter, but when you are alone, or sick, or in your sober senses, you tremble at the judgment to come. You *know* it man, and at the bayonet-point, I charge home upon you. O that I could carry your heart as readily as your conscience. You know that these things are not fictions nor falsehoods. If you should have some honest doubts, you have but to open your eyes to see, and use your common sense to be convinced. Do but listen to the utterances of your fellow sinners, as they have passed from time into eternity, and have felt the foretaste of eternal wrath, and surely you must confess that there is a God that visiteth transgression and sin upon the ungodly. But you will tell me perhaps, there is time enough, and therefore you may sleep; but there is no time, man, there is no time to spare. If I were in a fever I would not say, "There is time enough to be healed," but I would say "Let me be delivered from this consuming heat." If I stood just now upon the edge of a burning mountain and felt the lava giving way beneath my feet, I would not say "There is time enough yet," but I would long *now* to make my escape. Sinner, thou standest to day over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; you are swinging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping now. *Now! now!* thou art in danger! Thou mayest die this morning. Many places of worship have been made places of death. God save thee, that this may not happen to thee, but still this is thy time of danger, and there is no time to spare.

Do you say, "Well, we may as well sleep, for *there's no hope for us?*" No! sinner, no! Blessed be God, you cannot say that! You that sit under my ministry constantly know I never taught you that, I never said of any one of you that you could not be saved. I have preached to you no impossible gospel; I have not shut the gates of mercy on mankind in proclaiming Christ; have I not rather told you that "He is willing to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him?" I have set the door open before you and I have entreated you to come in; nay, I have laboured to compel you to come in that his house may be filled. Even

now again I utter the same message, "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." Trust in Jesus; trust in Jesus, and thou shalt be saved. Thy despair is wicked, for it gives God the lie; thy despondency is sinful, for it doubts the truth of him who cannot be false to himself or to thee. Sinner, trust him and thou shalt be saved this morning. God help thee to throw thyself flat to-day upon the covenanted promises of God in Christ, and trusting his precious blood he will save thee now and save thee for ever. O wherefore, wherefore sleepest thou? If you can cite no good cause, if you can offer no cogent reason, what meanest thou then, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God.

But soul, soul, we remind thee yet again, as we cannot understand thy sleep, and thou canst not justify it, we would solemnly beg thee to consider that *thy sleep will soon end in ruin.* Ah, there are some of you whose hearts I shall never reach. Let me live as long as I may, I shall never see you saved. There are some of you—I have often made you weep, but the Lord has not made you hate your sins. Some of you love drunkenness, and though you leave it for a little season, yet all the entreaties of the minister and all the pleadings of your conscience cannot keep you from returning like a dog to your vomit, and like a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. Oh, my hearers, there are some of you—I have not quite despaired of you, but I tell you solemnly it has almost come to that. O that ye would know even now in this your day the things which make for your peace. Oh, how I fear, and think I have just cause to fear, that there are some of you who will sit in this Tabernacle till you die, and you will go from this place to hell with my voice of entreaty ringing in your ears. I have prayed for you, and you are not saved; I have levelled sermons at you, and you have not been moved; I have preached plainly to your face against your iniquity, and laid your sin before your eyes, and ye have not repented; I have held up my Master's bleeding body and ye have not been wooed to love. Ye have been convicted for a season, and ye have hushed the voice of conscience; ye have vowed, and ye have broken your vows; ye have turned again to your folly, and ye are still what you were, senseless, stolid, hardened, dead in sin. I shall not for ever hammer at this granite; not always shall the horses run upon the rock, nor shall we plough there with oxen, for God shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and *where are ye then?* Oh! if we knew by express revelations, concerning any man here present that he would be one day in hell, if looking into his eyes we could read there, "That man will dwell for ever in torments," should we not weep over him? Yet I fear me there are such here. I fear me—may God remove the fear by his grace—I fear me there are such. "Lord, is it I?" let each one say—

"Lord, is it I?" Well, sinner, thou shalt go sleeping on. Thou wilt go home to thy house to-day and forget all that I have said; thou wilt come again to-night, but the result will be the same; like the door on its hinges thou wilt turn in and out without a change all thy days. See man, thou wilt listen to my voice, it will be to thee as a pleasing song but nothing more; thou wilt be all thy life as the deaf adder which cannot be charmed. Thou wilt now and then murmur in thy sleep, "The preacher is too earnest, and makes too much noise about these melancholy matters, or he is too prone to dwell on these hard threatenings." You will return to a deeper sleep, and so continue year by year. How do you approve of the prospect? But stay, let me finish the story. One day there will run a rumour among us, "So-and-so who sat in that pew is dead." "Did he die in the Lord?" will be our solemn question. And the answer will be, "We fear not; he showed no signs of repentance or of faith in Christ." Ah then, what must our conclusion be. Well sinner, well, do me this one favour. If thou wilt be damned, let me be clear of thy blood. Do me but this one service—if thou wilt perish let it not be laid to the door of my unfaithfulness. If there be anyone here present, stranger or regular attendant, who will choose his own perdition, I charge thee pay some regard to my earnest protest, for I enter it now before the Lord. Be damned if thou wilt, but do let me first of all stand before you and tell you what damnation means, and tell you that there is a way of salvation. Let me stretch out these hands again and plead with you that ye would come to Christ, that ye might live. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God," for it may soon be too late for thee to arise. None will be able to warn thee soon, none will weep for thee soon, none will entreat thee soon. When once the iron gates are shut, and the brazen bolts are drawn; all the friendship of earth or the fury of hell cannot unlock them; the awful gratings of those bolts that shut in souls for ever in fell despair, shall be ever in thine ears, covering thee with hopeless dismay. Now I pray you while yet there is hope. "Awake! arise, or be for ever fallen!"

Lastly, I think I may call upon those present here, who know what it is to be fully awakened, to do their best to awaken others. We read in ancient history of the Sybarites, who were a people so given to slumber that they killed their dogs lest their barking should arouse them, and would have no crowing of the cock to awake them at morn; there are some sinners who would desire to banish every warning friend and faithful monitor far away from them. But I pray you, even though it should be unpleasant, do your best to keep your friends from ruin. We know that when persons are likely to perish through laudanum, and they are falling to sleep, the physician does

not hesitate to thrust pins into the flesh, or walk them up and down even though they cry and long to go to sleep. So with you, be not too careful about wounding the feelings or shocking the nerves if you may but win the soul. Better that you should get into discredit for being impertinent with your friends than let their souls perish through your politeness. Be ye not like Agag, who cometh delicately, with "surely the bitterness of death is past." Like the old Puritans, who availed themselves of every opportunity to rebuke sin and uphold righteousness, so be you instant in season and out of season. If you should save a soul through being too zealous, neither your Master nor the saved one will blame you for it, and at least in heaven it will never be a source of regret to you that you were too active and too diligent. You may have an opportunity to-day. Who can tell whether God may not bless you in it, if you use it? But I pray you use it, whether he bless you or not, lest the neglect of that opportunity should leave blood upon your skirts. By him that bought you with his blood, live to his service—by him that called you unto a holy calling, give yourselves wholly to the winning of souls—by him who from the beginning hath chosen you unto salvation, live as the elect of God, having bowels of compassion. By your life, for which you are responsible—by your death, which may be so near—by Jesus, whose face you hope to see—by hell, into which lost souls are sinking—by heaven, to which the penitent shall rise, which is your hope and your joy—proclaim the word everywhere to men. Tell it, tell it till the skies shall echo it. "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" "Cast thy bread upon the waters"—labour, toil, seek, strive, agonize—and God give you his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in."—Malachi iii. 1.

THE Lord's people delight in the covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them to its green pastures, and makes them to lie down beside its still waters. They can sweetly sing of it from youth even to hoar hairs, from childhood even to the tomb, for this theme is inexhaustible:

"Thy covenant the last accent claims
Of this poor faltering tongue;
And that shall the first notes employ
Of my celestial song."

They delight to contemplate *the antiquity* of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember *the sureness* of the covenant. They love to meditate upon "the sure mercies of David." They delight to celebrate the covenant in their songs of praise, as "signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well." It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its *immutability*, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall ever be able to violate;—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of ages. They rejoice also to feast upon *the fulness* of this covenant, for they see it in all things provided for them.—God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their comforter, earth their lodge and heaven their home. They see in it not only some things, but all things; not only a help to obtain some desirable possessions, but an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul that has an interest in this ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but O how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate *the graciousness* of this covenant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because grace is the basis, grace the condition, grace the strain, grace the

bulwark, grace the foundation, grace the topstone. From the beginning even to the end, it is all of grace. They see that the covenant runneth on this wise, not "I will if you will," but "I will and you shall;" not "I will reward if you deserve," but "I will forgive even if you sin;" not "I will cleanse if you are clean," but "I will cleanse if you are filthy;" not "I will keep if you assist," but "I will bring you back even if you be lost, I will surely save you and preserve you even to the end." I know some Christians—bleared-eyed, like Leah—who cannot see afar off, and hence the councils of eternity they cannot behold. I know some believers of weak knees and feeble joints who are afraid of that strong word "Covenant." But they that are men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of years have had their senses exercised, know that the covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a store-house of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy. The covenant! let my soul but anchor here, then howl ye winds, and roar ye hurricanes! I will not fear. The covenant! let my soul but cast its anchor here, and come life with all its tribulations, and death with all its pains and terrors, my soul laughs them all to scorn.

"The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.

We advance a step further towards our text, and remark that the "Messenger of the covenant" is a welcome ambassador to those who are interested in those exceeding great and precious promises which pertain to life and godliness. But, waiving further preface, let us notice, first, *that we delight in the office of Christ as the messenger of the covenant;* next, *that we delight in the way in which he fulfils that office;* and then, we shall conclude by noticing *some ways in which we show our delight.*

I. First, then, WE DELIGHT IN CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE OF MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

What is that office? I shall need two or three words to explain it. When we read of Christ as messenger of the covenant, I think we may understand him to be a *covenanted messenger.* Now, God has sent many messengers, whose words, when they have spoken in His name, he has not suffered to fall to the ground. So far they were covenanted messengers; but these persons sometimes spoke of themselves, and then God had not bound himself by promise to keep their words. Sometimes, even like the apostle Paul, they would have to pause and say, "I think I have the Spirit of God," but they might not be certain. But Christ is a covenanted messenger. God hath sworn to him to do for us whatever he may promise to us, so that if we believe in God we may believe also in him, since he speaks for God, and his every word is settled in heaven—

"Array'd in mortal flesh,
He like an angel stands,
And holds the promises
And pardons in his hands:
Commission'd from his Father's throne
To make his grace to mortals known."

Again, he is the covenanted messenger; on our behalf Christ swore to God

to carry out that part of the covenant which was left for man, and so he stood as a covenanted messenger between God and man. The word "plenipotentiary" just hits my thought. You know sometimes kings send out ambassadors to try and negotiate peace, but they have limited powers. On other occasions ambassadors are sent with unlimited, unrestricted power, to make peace or not, and to make it just as they will. Now Christ comes as the covenanted ambassador of God, as the plenipotentiary of heaven. Let him do what he will, God is with him; let him promise what he may, God ratifies it; let him speak what he will to our souls, his word shall certainly be fulfilled. Now do you not rejoice in Christ in this office. He has said to us, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Rest," saith the eternal Father, as he confirms Jesus' word. "Go in peace, thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." "They *are* forgiven thee," saith the court of heaven, "go in peace." "He that believeth on me is not condemned," saith Christ; and the Father saith himself "He is not condemned." There is not a word of the gospel which the Father has left unsanctioned. You need not therefore, when you venture upon Christ's word and Christ's merit, think you are resting on a something which God will not accept. He is God's covenanted messenger. He is sworn to accept whom Christ accepts, and since Christ saves all that trust in him, the Father accepts them likewise. He will save certainly all whom Christ hath declared shall be saved.

This, however, does not exhaust the meaning. Christ is the messenger of the covenant, in the next place, as *the messenger of the Father to us*. Moses was messenger of the covenant of works, and his face shone, for the ministration of death was glorious; but Christ is the messenger of the covenant of grace. O let his face shine in your esteem, ye saints of the Lord, for the ministration of life must be more glorious, far! Christ comes to us to tell us all that God will tell. The revelation of God is Christ. If you would know God, he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father. God's *word* is Jesus, he speaketh fully by him. Would you know the father's decree? "I will declare the decree," saith Christ. Would you know his character? See every attribute of God in the man, Christ. Would you know his designs? See the designs of God effected in the works of Jesus. Would you know in fact all that is knowable of God? Understand that you can see it, not in nature, nor in providence, but in Jesus,

> "God in the person of his Son,
> Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

And will you not delight in him as such—as God's messenger to you? —If the very ministers of Christ are delightful to you, if their feet are beautiful upon the tops of the mountains when they bring glad tidings, how much more beautiful is he who comes from God to man, with messages of peace, declaring to us that God is reconciled to us, and accepteth us in the beloved. Sing his praises, O ye that have heard his voice. Glory ye in his holy name, O ye that have received his report, unto whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed, for as God's messenger to you, ye should delight in him.

But then, he is, as the messenger of the covenant, *our messenger and*

mediator with the Father. You want to tell your Father something; Jesus stands to carry the message for you. George Herbert, in one of his poems, pictures Christ as using the hole in his side as a bag to carry our letters to glory—

"If ye have anything to send or write,
(I have no bag, but here is room)
Unto my father's hands and sight
(Believe me) it shall safely come.
That I shall mind, what you impart;
Look, you may put it very near my heart."

In the wounds of Christ we put our messages to God, and they go up to heaven with something more added to them. The blots and blurs of our petition Christ wipeth out, and then he savoureth our prayers, and incenseth them by putting with them the costly mixture of his own precious righteousness. See! In his golden censer yonder smokes the incense of your prayer, accepted for the incense sake, and for the sake of him who swings it to and fro as it smokes before the Most High. "The messenger of the covenant;" this name is peculiar to our Lord. Let not any man arrogate this office to himself, for it is Christ's alone. God never did hear a message from man that he accepted, except through this messenger. I cannot get to God directly, I must have a mediator. Well said Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God; for our God is a consuming fire." No sigh ever reached the Most High, except through Christ—I mean so as to move his heart to pour out his grace. Prayers, groans, tears, all these are like arrows without a bow, till Christ comes and fits them to the string, and shoots them home for you and me. All our prayers are like a victim, with the wood and altar; Christ must bring the fire, and then the sacrifice smokes to heaven. He is the messenger. Oh Christian, do you not rejoice in him then as the messenger of the covenant? He is doing thy errands before the throne to-night, pleading for me, pleading for you. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." You came to this house to-night, you offered prayer, Christ is offering it now, as an offering most divinely sweet. As you are sitting here, you are breathing a vow, or a desire to heaven; Christ presents it, for he stands at the golden altar, having a censer full of the prayer and vows of saints. Give him an errand now. Try him at this moment, entreat him to plead on your behalf. Thus view him; thus exercise your faith upon him as the plenipotentiary from God to man, as the revealer of God to man, and as spokesman from man to God.

"Look up, my soul, with cheerful eye,
See where the great Redeemer stands,—
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in his hands!
He sweetens every humble groan,
He recommends each broken prayer;
Recline thy hope on him alone,
Whose power and love forbid despair."

II. But briefly on the second point. WE DELIGHT IN THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST HAS CARRIED OUT THIS OFFICE AS MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

And here let us dwell on that part of the office which relates to *the revelation of God to man.* Oh, what a full messenger has he been! He has not dropped half the message; he has not told us a part of God, but all that his heavenly Father bade him declare, he has revealed unto

us as we could bear it; and he has given us this day the Holy Spirit, who shall lead us into all truth, who shall take of the things of Christ, which the Father gave him, and reveal them unto us. What a full messenger, and how faithful! Surely the Master could say, "I have kept back nothing that is profitable for you." With greater emphasis than ever Paul could say it, he might have declared, "I am clear from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." We poor messengers mar the Master's message in the telling of it, but "Never man spake like this man." So full and faithful is he who speaketh with Jehovah's bidding to his chosen people, that he can say, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Then, *how willingly he does it!* "I delight to do thy will, O God." How sweet it seemed to him to show God out to us! Even his tears, though bitterly they flowed, were cheerfully bestowed; and his very death, though it was an awful baptism, yet was one for which he longed. How was he straitened until it was accomplished! I hate a man to be a messenger who goes unwillingly, and who mumbles out the message as if he had no interest in it; but oh! our sweet Lord Jesus tells God's message to us as though he were more interested in it than we are; tells it so lovingly, so affectionately, so tenderly, with all his heart, turning his soul out that we may see it, writing his very nature out in streams of blood, that we might see in crimson lines what otherwise we might not have been able to perceive. Oh, how well—better than ministers, better than prophets, better than apostles, better than angels, Christ hath performed the office of messenger from God. Solomon's proverb is all outdone in our Redeemer's case. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters."

Beloved, let us delight equally as much in *the way in which he has performed our message from ourselves to God.* Ah, I have been to my advocate a thousand times, but I never found him a weary messenger. You have a servant, and you give him many things to do; but towards nightfall it may be that you give him one thing too many, and the poor man's weary feet and languid looks chide you when you give him the errand. But I have been to my Master, and so have you, in the dead of night, and I never found him asleep. I have been to him in the heat of summer, but I never found him point to his bloody sweat, and say he could not go. I have been to him a thousand times, and yet I have never, never heard him say, "I have served thee enough, I will not be thy messenger again." But cheerfully, willingly hath he taken our request to God, again, and again, and again, and presented it there. And how full of sweet powers of memory and generous recollections he has been! We have often failed to tell him the message aright, and sometimes there was a part of it that we could not tell him—groanings that could not be uttered—but he read the message, and then told it perfectly out in the other place, within the veil, never forgetting one desire nor one faint wish; sometimes erasing one that was evil and putting in another that was right, but he hath never forgotten us. The blessed Master hath a thousand souls to plead for; nay, what if I say millions!

but never hath he forgotten one. The meanest lamb in his flock he has tended; the poorest subject in his dominions has been the object of his advocacy. And then, brethren, with what passionate love hath he pleaded for us in heaven! Oh, you cannot conceive him, for he is high above us; but if we could see him to-night, standing before the throne, we should say, "I never thought I had such an advocate as this;"—not with sighs and tears, for they are over now, but with authority he pleads, points to his wounded hands and to his side, and urges the case of his people as though it were his own case, and so indeed, it is, for he may well say—

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me—my flesh and my bones."

Never such an advocate as this. Fathers might plead for sons, and a wife might throw herself on the ground to plead with a judge for her husband, but never such a pleader as this. Thou messenger of the covenant, none can plead as thou dost.

And then, dear friends, I think we ought to delight in him, when we think how unflaggingly *he perseveres in his intercession*, though we are continually forgetful and ungrateful for his kindness. I am sure if we had a friend's cause to plead, and he were as unworthy and forgetful as we are, we should tell him to suit himself, and find some other advocate. But he, for Zion's sake, doth not hold his peace, for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest. Going to and fro from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, he speaketh messages of love from God to our souls, bearing messages of pleading and of intercession from our souls to God. Take thou, beloved, a sweet delight in Jesus, for he doth his errand well. He is a choice messenger, one among a thousand, yea the chief among ten thousand.

III. But time flies, and therefore we hasten onward to carry out our third proposal. HOW ARE WE TO SHOW THAT WE DO REALLY DELIGHT IN CHRIST? Well, there is one way of doing it, and that is by again *employing him to-night*. Thou hast been upon my errands so many times, my sweet Lord, that thou shalt even go again. I ask thee, brother Christian, to let me speak to thee a moment. I know thou hast some very heavy matter on thy mind to-night, some very heavy trial awaiteth thee to-morrow, and thou hast been troubled about it all the week. Dost thou delight in the messenger of the covenant? Ah, then send thy Jesus with it as a message to the throne to-night. Say thou unto Jesus, "I pray thee tell the Father that one of his adopted who can say, 'Abba,' is in trouble deep and sore. Send thou from heaven and deliver me, and pluck me out of the deep waters." Thou wilt show thy delight in him by trusting him in thy great matters. Oh, but you mean to do it yourself; you have all your wits about you and mean to get through it yourself do you? You shall flounder in the mire. But give the matter up to *Him* and let him take it to thy God and see whether prayer does not more often prevail in trial than all the energies and wits of man. And sister over yonder, thou hast a secret, one thou wouldst not tell to me, no, nor to thy dearest friend, but it rankles and it makes thy heart bleed in secret till sometimes thou art weary of thy life. Dost thou love the messenger of the covenant?

Whisper into his ear what thou canst tell to none beside, and ask him to speak for thee to the king, to the captain of the host. Say unto him, "Jesus, lover of my soul, I'll trust thee with this most secret grief. That which no creature can intermeddle with, thou shalt know; behold I bare the wound before thy tender eye; go tell the Father that a child of his is weeping in secret, walking in darkness and seeing no light." Thou wilt show thy delight in him by trusting him now. Minister, send a messenger by him to-night for thy flock! Sunday school teacher, give him a missive from thy heart for thy class! Mother, the messenger waits for thee, ask him to plead for thy sons and daughters! Father, the messenger is ready to bear thy wish to heaven! Tell him thou wouldst have no greater joy than this, to see thy children walk in the truth! Jesus, say thou to thy Father that *my* prayer to-night is that I would have this congregation saved. Oh speak thou; bear the ponderous message; ask that not one within these walls may perish. Lift up thy hands, and plead for every man, and woman, and child, beneath this tabernacle's dome to-night, and ask that every one may be a partaker of the grace that saves. I know that thou wilt prevail if thou wilt ask, for if thou shouldest ask anything of thy Father he will do it for thee. Thou hast but to will it and 'tis done. Behold, by faith I would lay hold upon the skirt of thy garment thou great High Priest, the sweetly sounding bells of thy ephod I hear to-night; upon thy glittering breast-plate the eyes of my faith are fixed. Take that request, and plead it solemnly before the awful throne of heaven, and let the answer come to all this multitude—an answer of grace and peace! Thus, my beloved, we must show our delight in him—by bidding him plead for us.

Leaving for a moment the thought of messenger, I want to add some other things, not quite, perhaps, in keeping with our text, but quite in harmony with our delight in Jesus. You are coming round the table, brothers and sisters, and you delight in Christ. Shall I tell you how it is that we show that we delight in him?

One way is by *waiting for him*. There is the wife at evening. It is past the proper hour for her husband to return. She goes to the window and looks out into the cold dark night, and then she goes back to the chair, and to the little one, and takes her needle and whiles away the time, but soon she is up again looking out of the window once more, and listening to every foot-fall in the street, or looking out from the open door. Why is not her spouse at home? How is it that he is away? She sits down again, she tries to ease her mind with household business, but every ticking of the clock, and every striking of the hour suggests to her, "Why is he so long in coming?" See she is again drawing back the curtains and looking out into the black night for the hundredth time, longing for her husband, and why? because she takes delight in him, and wants to see his face. So when Christians look out into the dark world and say, "When will he come?" and when they go to their labour, and say, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long in coming?" and when they can cry with John, "Come quickly, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," and are waiting for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of man, then they prove that they have intense delight in him. Do you show

this, Christian? Are you waiting for him? Are you getting ready for the time when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God?

"Come, my beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of thy delay:
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow."

We prove our delight in him in another way, by *working for him*. There is a woman there; she is working hard at her embroidery needle; she is making a little coat; it is a linen ephod. I wonder why that woman smiles so, while she works with her needle? There, she must put it away, for there is other work to do. I wonder why next day she goes to the drawer, so pleased to get that work out and continue it? I will tell you her name; her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, and she is making a little coat for her son Samuel, whom she has left with Eli at the Tabernacle; now you perceive wherefore is she so pleased in making this ephod? Because she delighteth in Samuel. So I see the Sunday school teacher pleased to meet his children; I see the minister go to the pulpit with beaming eye, and I see the missionary leaving house and home, kindred and cherished associations, joyfully giving up everything for Christ, and I ask why? Because he delights in Christ, and therefore he can work for him. Is it so with you, friends, are you working for Christ? Yes, methinks you are, or else I fear me you are not delighting in him.

And then another thing. I have seen the boy at school—I knew such a boy myself—and one day that child was at play, and merry was he at his games, and well intent thereat, but some lad ran across the ground, and said, "Your father's come to see you," and he laid aside his playthings and his games, and ran at once into his father's arms because he delighted in his parent. And I have seen the Christian when he is delighting in his God, when lecture or prayer-meeting night came, say, "Well, I will gladly lose a little of my business, that I may run into my Father's arms in the hour of worship." There has been a saint to be visited, or a sinner to be warned, and I have seen the lovers of Jesus leave their nets that they may follow Christ, and forsake the world, that they might serve him. Beloved, if he were to come to-night and bid us choose whether we would be in heaven or here, I think we would not long delay, but say to him, "Thou leavest me no choice." To be with thee is so much better than aught beside, that I embrace thee now. Oh take me up to thee!

Further, we may show our delight in Christ by *searching after him when we lose his presence*. There is the spouse in the Canticles; she is going about in the city in the dark night—"Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" The watchmen meet her and pluck away her veil rudely, and they smite her. Why is not that delicate woman at home at rest? See, she wanders on, cold and weary, with tears rolling down her cheeks, and hanging like pearls from her eyes. Wherefore is this woman weeping and searching thus? The answer is—"Tell me O thou whom my soul lovest, where thou feedest?" She hath such a delight in him, that she will search a thousand nights; yea, a believing soul

would search hell through to find Christ, if he were to be found nowhere else; and I know what Rutherford said was no great exaggeration, when he said, "If there were fifty hells between my soul and Christ, and he bade me wade through them and he would come and meet me, I fain would dash through them all to reach his fond embrace." Jesu, our thirst for thee is insatiable; we must have thee, and thus we prove our delight in thee.

Lastly, we may prove our delight in Christ by *being very happy ourselves and trying to make others partakers of our joy.* Do not go to the Lord's table to-night if you can help it burdened with your groans and moans. If you cannot come without bringing them, then come; come anyhow. But I would have you to-night, if you could, delight yourselves in the Lord. You are very poor.—Ah! but you are very rich in him. You are sick, you say.—Ay! but remember what he suffered for you. Oh! but you are a sinner. Ay! but remember his precious blood! Fix your eye on *him* to-night and on nothing else, and oh be glad! Come to his table with delight. I often say I know the people that come here—our regular people that come here—because they have a way of walking, and a look on the Sabbath that is different from most people that go to other places of worship. Other folks are so solemn, as if they were going to an execution. They look so grave, as if it were an awful work to serve God, as bad as going to prison, to attend a service, and as disagreeable as the pillory to stand up and praise the Lord. But I notice that you come here with joy, looking upon the Sabbath as a joyous day, not a time to pull the blinds down and shut out the light, but a day to feast yourselves in God. Now I think ordinance days are especially times of rejoicing. You and I have been all the week up to our elbows in work. By-and-bye we shall have to go back to that dingy workroom among those persecuting worldlings. Never mind; Lord make this as a sanctuary to us to-night. Shut us in and shut the world out, and let us rejoice ourselves in our God.

"As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me;
And while he makes my soul his guest,
Thy bosom, Lord, shall be my rest.

No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with thy courts on earth compare;
And here we wait, until thy love
Raise us to nobler seats above."

Beloved brethren, if you have this delight *tell it to others.* Do not be tongue-tied and dumb any of you. Speak out what God has done for you. Tell! tell!—

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour you have found."

If you should have any enjoyment to-night, let others partake of the honey which you have discovered. God help you thus to live to his praise.

I am about to retire a few moments, while our friends get to their seats for the communion. Before I retire, I have a message to tell from the Messenger of the Covenant. He is willing to take a message from any poor, troubled, sin-burdened, conscience-stricken sinner in this Tabernacle. Has any one of you a message for him? The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive and stamp with his own blood-

marked hand any earnest, heart-written message you are willing to send to God to-night. Is there any one who has this to send—"God be merciful to me a sinner?" What! Not one of you? Is there not a heart here that would say, "Lord save or I perish?" Surely there are some! Breathe thy desire out now silently; Jesus hears it; trust him to carry it to God. Believe that his blood can cleanse thee. Trust him, trust his merits to clothe thee. Trust especially his intercession to prevail for thee as the messenger of the covenant. Do it soul. "Oh but," you say, "my hand is black." Never mind, he will touch it and make it white. "Oh but I cannot pray." He can pray for you. "Oh but I cannot plead." He can plead in your stead. Tell him your wants. As Rowland Hill once did, so would I do with you. It is said that Rowland once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern; and having a pair of horses to bait, and going into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, "Glad to see you Mr. Hill." "I am going," was the reply, "to stay with you to-night; will you let me have family prayer to-night in this house?" "I never had such a thing as family prayer here," said the landlord, "and I don't want to have it now." "Very well, then just fetch my horses out; I can't stop in a house where they won't pray to God. Take the horses out." Now being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it, and promises to have family prayer. "Ah but," said Hill, "I'm not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people's houses. You must conduct it yourself." The man said he could not pray. "But you must," said Rowland Hill. "Oh but I never did pray." "Then my dear man you will begin to-night," was the answer. So when the time came, and the family were on their knees, "Now," said Rowland Hill, "every man prays in his own house; you must offer prayer to-night." "I can't pray, *I can't*," said the landlord. "What, man, you have had all these mercies to-day, and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been. Can't you tell God what a sinner you've been and ask for pardon?" The man began to cry, "I can't pray, Mr. Hill, I can't, indeed I can't." "Then tell the Lord, man, you can't; tell him you can't pray," said Mr. Hill, "and ask him to help you." Down went the poor landlord on his knees. "O Lord I can't pray; I wish I could." "Ah! you have begun to pray," said Rowland Hill, "you have begun to pray, and you will never leave off. As soon as God has once set you to pray, faint though it be, you will never leave off. Now I'll pray for you." And so he did, and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord's hard heart and to bring him to Christ. Now I say, if any of you can't pray, tell the Lord you can't. Ask him to help you to pray; ask him to show you your need to be saved; and if you can't pray, ask him to give you everything that you need. Christ will make as well as take the message. He will put his own blood upon your prayer; and the Father will send down the Holy Ghost to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ.

May the Lord send you away with his blessing to-night. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He hath made us accepted in the beloved."—Ephesians i. 6.

"THE beloved!" This was a golden name which the ancient Church in her most joyous moments was wont to give to the Anointed of the Lord. When the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in her land, *her* love-note was sweeter than either bird or turtle, as she sung, "My beloved is mine and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." Ever in her song of songs doth she call him by that delightful name, "My beloved!" Even in the long winter when idolatry had withered the garden of the Lord, her prophets found space to cease from uttering the thunders of judgment, to lay aside the burden of the Lord for a little season, and to say, as Esaias did, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard." Though the saints had never seen his face, though as yet he was not made flesh, nor had dwelt among us, nor had man beheld his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, yet he was the consolation of Israel, the hope and joy of all the chosen, the beloved of all those who were upright before the Most High. Brethren, in the summer days of the Church, let us not fail to call Christ our Beloved. Both in our prayers and songs in public, and in those nearer and dearer approaches which we make to him in private, when we may use more tender epithets than we would venture to do in a mixed assembly, we are wont to speak of Christ as the best Beloved of our soul, and to feel that he is to us very precious, the "chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." So true is it that the Church loves Christ, and claims him as her beloved, that the apostle dares to defy the whole universe to separate her from the love of Christ, and declares that neither persecutions, distress, affliction, peril, or the sword, have been able to do it; nay, he joyously boasts, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us;" and he concludes his bold utterance by declaring that he is persuaded that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We think we should not be trespassing into

the realms of imagination, if we ventured to say that Christ is also the beloved of the angels. To him cherubim and seraphim continually do cry; for in that thrice-repeated strain, there is a word for the second person of the Trinity, as well as for the first and the third: "Holy, *holy*, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." And, certainly, the blood-bought call him their beloved; for their incessant strain is, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto to him be glory for ever and ever."

Yet, my dear friends, the main reason why Christ is thus styled by the Holy Spirit "the beloved," doubtless is because he is the beloved of the Father's heart. "This," said the mysterious voice from heaven in the midst of the waters of Jordan, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And again, at the resurrection of Lazarus there came the same voice from heaven, announcing the perpetuity of the Father's love. None of us can tell how dear Jesus must be to his Father. We have, however, abundant proofs of the fact that he is very near unto him, for he is privy to all his Father's counsels. From the counsels of the Most High, Christ was never absent. "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" "Let us make man," said God, "in our own image,"—calling Christ into creation's work. "Without him was not anything made that was made," is the declaration of John the divine. Beside this, we know that everything which is done of the Father by his divine decree is that he may glorify his Son; while, on the other hand, the Son lived and died, and lives again that he may glorify the Father. Such is their mutual interest in one another that we cannot suppose a relationship closer, nor a love more intense than that which exists between the Father and the Son. It were foolish and ridiculous in me to attempt to dive into the awful depths of the divine unity. We know that the Father is one with the Son, and that Jesus is one with Jehovah. The unity of essence is a well so deep, that I cannot expect to find its bottom; and the love which springeth up from this essential unity must be more deep and profound than the wit of man can guess, or than the language of man can utter. I repeat the confession of our ignorance, it is impossible for us to form even a guess of the intensity of the affection that must exist between the eternal Father and Jesus Christ, his Son; since their essential union from which this affection springs is a doctrine beyond our comprehension, and is meekly to be received of our faith. Certainly we know that never was the term "beloved" so full of meaning, never did human word become so divinely rich as when God himself, by the Holy Ghost, applied it to Jesus *the beloved* of the Father.

No more, however, concerning this word "the beloved," except that I

trust there are many of us here who can thus salute our covenant Head. Yes, he is very dear to us. We love him because he first loved us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and it hath kindled in our poor souls a flame undying, which neither life nor death shall quench, but which shall burn brighter and brighter till it consumes flesh and self, and we shall be all on flame with love to Christ.

Now, dear friends, having thus brought forward the title of Christ, I I shall, in dependance upon the Eternal Spirit, call your attention, first of all, to the words "*in the beloved*," or "*positive union;*" secondly, to the words "*accepted in the beloved*," or *glorious condition;* and then to the whole text, "*he hath made us accepted in the beloved*," or *divine operation.*

I. First then, here is a matter most worthy of your best and profoundest thoughts—"IN THE BELOVED," or, POSITIVE UNION.

A thousand sermons would never exhaust the theme of the union of the Church with Christ. No divinity is sound which does not recognise this; and no experience can be very profound which does not lead the soul more clearly and more fully to rejoice in this most glorious truth. Probably it is a doctrine more suitable to advanced Christians than to young believers; but where the Lord enables the heart to feed upon it it will be found to be food at once nourishing, delicious, satisfying, and strengthening. They who feed upon it will be found like Daniel and his companions, to be fairer in countenance and fatter in flesh than any others.

1. In explaining this positive union, let us begin by saying "*in Christ*,"—that is, *in his heart*, and in his heart from all eternity. With prescient eye Christ beheld his people before they were yet formed. He looked forward through eternity and the rolling years of time, and he foresaw that God would make man; and that man in Adam would fall and be ruined. His eye looked over all the sons of Adam, and selected those whom he saw fit according to the counsel of his will: and these at once were put into his heart to be his darlings, his favourites for ever and ever. It was not in time that Christ first wrote the names of his people upon his heart: it was a time before all times, when there was no day but the ancient of days; when creation's first year had not commenced; when all things slept in the mind of God as a thought, but had not come forth from his hand as a deed. We look upon the rocks with their long deposits of sand and shells: we go deeper down and see the long ages that must have passed while the stony strata were being formed; we wonder at the period that the aqueous and igneous rocks must have occupied in their formation; and sometimes we are staggered at the thought of what a great thing time is. We find we cannot grasp the idea of "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" it is so far back that the wings of our imagination flag before they reach it as a resting place. But there was an eternity before all this; and all these ages are but as the drop of a bucket compared with the deep and bottomless sea of the eternity of God. Yet, when we fly back into the dread eternity, where thought is lost and mind faileth, we discover in the breast of Christ eternal thoughts of love towards his children. Is it not a joy that can make your spirits dance, like David before the ark, that we are always Jesus' beloved ones, always in the heart of him whose heart was afterwards in the fulness of time pierced for

us? Hath he not said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with the bands of my kindness have I drawn thee." "As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you." That is, without beginning; ever since there was a Father and a Christ. It were blasphemy to suppose that God's love to Jesus was not always existent, or that Christ had a beginning in the Father's affections. Even from that time Jesus had chosen his people, and they were in his heart. Beloved, as they *were* in his heart, so they have been in his heart ever since. When they fell *in* Adam they did not fall *out of* Christ; when they lived in this world a life of iniquity, yet still there was his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. When they scorned his grace, his love defied, trampled on his cross, and despised his blood, yet still never from his heart were they erased, for they had been engraven there too deeply by the nails, for sin to destroy the remembrance. And now, to-day, now that we are continually backsliding, nothing has been able as yet to tear us from his heart. We are there, and we shall be there, in death's dark gloom and in eternity's mysterious splendour—dear to Jesus still, for is it not written, "He hateth putting away?" "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." So, then, beloved, we are in Christ in the sense that we are in Christ's heart, and we always were so if we are his people.

2. But, secondly, we are also *in Christ's book*. Having loved us, we were chosen in him and elected by his Father. We were not chosen separately and distinctly, and as individuals alone and apart. We were chosen *in Christ*. As Watts well puts it—

> "Christ, be my first elect, he said;
> Then chose our souls in Christ our head."

By Christ's love we were one with him. The Father's election chose the whole Christ, both the head and the members too. Christ can well say, "In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." We all know that Christ is elect and precious; that God singled out the humanity of Christ from many thousands of forms that he might have created, and ordained that the seed of the woman—the child that was born in Bethlehem, and laid in the manger—should become the body and the human soul which should be taken into union with divinity. Here was election; and as Christ was thus chosen both in the divine and human natures, so are all his people chosen—chosen in him. Blessed fact! the same register which includes Christ as first-born, includes all the brethren; and until the flames of hell can consume the record which certifies Christ as a Son of God, our sonship in Christ towards God must remain safe from all the attacks of Satanic craft. Disprove Christ's Sonship, and you disprove ours. Prove the union of Christ with God as his Son, and since Christ's people are in him, you prove their sonship too. Look down the red roll which God wrote with his eternal finger, according to the counsel of his will, and you see the names of all that should enter into eternal life; they are all there secure, because the first one is secure; and until the pen of hell can run through the first one in the catalogue, it shall never be able to

run through any of the others, for there stand the names of all the elect, covered, protected, and defended, by the name of Christ, which standeth at the head. We are in that book which is sealed with seven seals, which none but the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open.

3. Thirdly, we are *in Christ's hand.* We are in Christ's heart as our heavenly lover. We are in Christ's book as the medium of our election. We are in Christ's hand as our surety. You will remember, beloved, than when Laban gave up his flock to Jacob, Jacob took them upon the condition of suretyship. Jacob said unto Laban, "That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night." Now, all those whom the Father gave to Christ were bestowed upon Christ as a surety; and at the last great day, at the Redeemer's hand will God require the souls of all that were given to him. He is the great Shepherd of the sheep, responsible as the Mediator, responsible to him who possesseth all in all. Sponsor for his people, surety for all the chosen, he standeth at this hour before the eternal throne. And think ye, beloved, he will lose us? Never. He hath made us the choicest objects of his care. Shall his eye sleep? Shall his heart forget? Shall his hand grow weary? Shall he lose the force and strength which anciently he possessed? He hath sworn by himself that he will bring us safely to the Father—will he be defeated? He hath said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And shall the infernal lion rend that which He hath deigned to keep? What! shall he put his hand upon his people and shelter them there, and clutch them as the choicest treasure and the rarest jewel that he ever had, and shall death or hell unlock his fingers or wrench his chosen from his mighty grasp? Who shall defeat Omnipotence, or pluck the sinner from the Almighty grasp? Rejoice, believers, ye are saved just because ye are in the hand of Christ. I marvel at those who try to slip from that text, "None shall pluck them out of my hand," and think that souls can be lost after that: for the text doth not admit of any other meaning than their safety. "They shall never perish," and "I give unto them eternal life," are plain, literal, positive statements, which none can misunderstand. Happy are the men who are thus *in Christ.*

4. But, fourthly, we are *in Christ's loins.* This may convey a thought somewhat different from being in Christ's hands. We were all of us in the loins of Adam, and have all sprung from him by natural generation. Adam was our federal head. All his acts were representative acts. While he was obedient we were obedient in him. Had he continued obedient, we his descendants should have been partakers of the privileges which accrue to obedience. Adam offended; we offended in him. Being the inheritors of his nature we have partaken of his original corruption; and being moreover in him as our representative, we became partakers of his condemnation. In Adam all die. "By the offence of one man condemnation came upon all men." As being then in the loins of Adam we fell; and we should have fallen into everlasting perdition, if we as God's chosen had not been also in the loins of Christ. But all the chosen were in the loins of Christ from old eternity;

so that what Christ has done he did for them. When he obeyed the law and made it honourable, they were regarded before God as having kept the law and having honoured it in every jot and tittle. When he did hang upon the tree, the chosen who were in him were virtually suffering the wrath of God. Justice looks upon the chosen as though they themselves had suffered all that Christ suffered, as though they had drunk the wormwood and the gall and had descended into the lowest depths. When he was buried we were buried with him; for we are dead with Christ unto the world, and buried in baptism with him unto death. When Christ ascended from the tomb we rose in him. He rose again, not as a private individual, but for our justification. Virtually every elect soul rose from the eternal death of its deserved perdition in the day when Christ startled the keepers and rolled away the stone. And when Christ ascended up on high we ascended in him. Up with him we entered into the spheres; and with him to-day we are risen in Christ, and made with him to sit in heavenly places even in Christ Jesus. To-day, beloved, the language of the psalmist is more true than he thought concerning man, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." We see not all things yet put under man on earth; but we see Jesus, who as the representative man sits in heaven, triumphant over all things, having all things put for ever under his feet; and representatively under our feet too, since we are in Christ. Just as the apostle Paul argues concerning Levi, that Levi is inferior to Christ; for he says, Abraham was less than Melchisedec, for without doubt the less is blessed of the greater, so also Levi was less than Melchisedec, for he was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him. So beloved, as Levi was in the loins of Abraham and paid tithes to Melchisedec, so we were in the loins of Christ and paid the debt due to divine justice, gave to the law its fulfilment, and to wrath its satisfaction. In the loins of Christ we have passed through the tomb already, and have entered into that which is within the veil, and are made to sit down in heavenly places, even in him. This day the chosen of God are one with Christ and in the loins of Christ.

5. As we are in the heart of Christ, in the book of Christ, in the hand of Christ, and in the loins of Christ, there is yet another thought dearer and sweeter still. We are *in the person of Christ*; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. When the Spirit of God comes into the sinner and convinces him of sin, that sinner is led to look to Christ only for his salvation, Christ then becomes unto him the way and the life. By the mysterious operations of the quickening Spirit the sinner begins to live a spiritual life. Now, in the moment when the spiritual life was first given, there commenced in that soul a vital and personal union with the person of Christ Jesus. There had always been in that soul a secret mystical union *in the divine purpose*; but now there comes to be a union *in effect*, and the soul is in Christ from that hour, in a sense in which it never was before. Oh, do you understand what it is to be in Christ vitally? Beloved, no explanations can set this forth. "The natural man discerneth not the things which

be of the Spirit of God." These are things which must be known experimentally by each man for himself. Have you felt a life in you that is far superior to the vital principle which you inherit from your parent? Have you known that regeneration has given you another existence which generation did not confer upon you? Have you felt principles alive within which no education could have developed, and which no persuasion could have implanted? Have you within you the living and incorruptible seed of God, which abideth for ever? Have you been made partakers of the divine nature, having "escaped that corruption which is in the world through lust?" Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, the life in you is Christ in you the hope of glory; and your life is sustained by the fact that you are one with Christ, and suck the nourishment of your life from him just as the branch draws from the trunk the sap whereby it is invigorated and made to live.

"I can do nothing without thee,
My strength is wholly thine;
Wither'd and barren should I be
If sever'd from the vine."

I trust, brethren, that we are in union with Christ, not in theory, but in fact; not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of experience, till we can say, "Christ is in me, and I am in him; the life that I live in the flesh is no more I, but Christ that liveth in me."

"In the beloved," then, is a thought which is not very easy for us to bring out in so short a space of time.

Now, I want to put you to the test this morning, by appealing to you all whether you know anything about this. A great many will say, "Well, it is a very odd thing, we do not understand it." Take heed to yourselves, then; deal honestly with your spirits; inasmuch as you do not know what it is to be in Christ, then you are without Christ; and then you are without hope, and there remaineth nothing for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. No man out of Christ can be saved. In Christ the branch lives; but divided from Christ, men gather up the useless branches and cast them into the fire and they are burned. Come, now, I want to try you. The first question I ask you, to ascertain whether you are in Christ, is this—Is he all your *dependance?* For the union of the saint with Christ is set forth by the union of the stone with the building. Now, the stone in the building lies upon the foundation; there it resteth and abideth, being cemented fast to it. Do you rest upon Christ? I ask you, is he all your trust? There is a blessed text in one of the prophets, "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house, as well the cups as the flagons, they shall all hang on him." So dost thou hang on him? Canst thou feel to-day that without a falsehood all thy trust on him is set, that thou bringest from him all thy standing, all thy confidence, all thy peace? If so, let us hope that thy union is a true one. And if it be so, then, as I have sometimes seen stones in the old walls of Roman castles, which could scarcely have been separated from

the fabric, even by gunpowder itself, without the blasting up of the fabric too; so is it with you, unless the foundations can be removed you cannot be moved, for if you depend on him by a living faith, you are so a part of Christ that the living stone has grown into the living foundation, and separated from him you never can be in time or in eternity. Another question. If thou art to-day in Christ, then thou bringest forth some *fruit* unto him; for Christians are represented as being in Christ, as the branch is in the vine. "Every branch in me," said Christ, "that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." What say you? What are your fruits? Is there humility of mind? Holiness? Do you seek to walk like Jesus did? My dear hearers, this is a very sharp question to put to you, but I do put it to you personally, for by your works you must be judged at the last great day. His servants ye are whom ye obey; if ye give yourselves up to the pleasures of this world, to the lusts of the flesh, to your own selfishness, then ye are the servants of sin. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Do ye of the Spirit bring forth fruits of the Spirit? Do ye walk and act as the elect of God, putting on bowels of mercy and compassion? Have ye a single eye to Christ's glory, and do ye live to his service? If so, then thanks to God, no pruning knife shall cut away the branch that bringeth forth fruit. It is the branch which brings forth no fruit, which is not in Christ vitally, that is to be severed, cast away; but if thou be in him so as to bring forth fruit unto him, then fruit to eternal life shalt thou bear evermore.

Another question; dost thou *love* Christ? Does thy heart go out after him? Dost thou pant to be in his arms? Is his company thy heaven, is his absence thy hell? Remember, another figure which is used, is the union of the husband with the wife. Marriages that are made in heaven are cemented not by gold or beauty, but by love. In Christ there is an infinite love towards his people, insomuch that he left his Father and did cleave unto his wife, and they twain became one flesh. "This is a great mystery," said Paul, when he spoke concerning Christ and his Church. Art thou wedded to him by an affection which no time can alter except it be to deepen it? Are there ties which bind thy heart to him, which torture and racks cannot sunder? If there be, then thou art married unto one that will never put thee away, one that will never leave thee a widow, for thy Maker is thy husband and he loveth faithfully; one that calleth thee his Hephzibah, his soul delighteth in thee; and thy land he calleth Beulah, for he hath married it. Is there such a union? Art thou thus in Christ? Then a last question, and I will leave this point. Is there a *life* in thee? Is Christ the life of thy spirit? If you tell me you have nothing more in you than what nature gave you, then you are in nature's death. There is a supernatural life which is imparted by the Holy Ghost. Hence, we read in Scripture that believers are one with Christ as the members are one with the head. They are one in living union; if you cut away the head, the whole dies. Ay, and mark you, the head dies too. So Christ is one with us if we be really his; because he lives we shall live also; if we die Christ dies, and if Christ lives we live; and since he ever liveth to make intercession for

us, our eternal life is sure. But, oh, we must have this life. "Except a man eat my flesh," saith he, "and drink my blood, there is no life in him," as if there could not be spiritual life till Christ himself were there, and Christ not there without becoming life to our souls.

II. I now turn very briefly to our second point. The text tells us we are "ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

To be brief, and yet explicit, let me notice that I think the acceptance here meant, includes first of all, *justification before God.* We stand on our trial. When we stand in Christ we are acquitted; while standing in ourselves the only verdict must be condemnation. The term "acceptance," in the Greek, means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of *divine complacency.* When God looked upon the world of old, he said it was "very good:" and when the Lord looketh upon his people in Christ, he saith the same. But, methinks if there could be anything better than very good, he would say his people in Christ were better than the work of his own hands, since they wear not a created righteousness, but the righteousness of the Creator, Jesus Christ himself. They are, then, accepted by his justice, and they are viewed with complacency by his holiness. But this is not all. When it is written, "Accepted in the beloved," it means that those accepted are the objects of the *divine delight.* Friends, whenever I get to this thought, (and many a time in this house of prayer I have got to it) I always feel inclined to sit down and let you think it over, for it is such an extravaganza of divine grace that we, worms, mortals, sinners, should be the objects of divine love. When princes wed with beggars the world marvels; but when God sets his affections upon sinful men and women in Christ, oh, this is the wonder of wonders! Even the angels might desire to look into it. I do believe that when we have been in heaven ten thousand years, this will still be a subject of rapture and surprise, that ever He should have found anything in us in which he could take delight! To pity us, to show mercy to us, that I can understand; but to *love us!* —the big heart of God to love a creeping thing like man! the infinite soul of the Most High to pour itself out on such a mean, worthless creature as man! the everlasting God who filleth all in all, to concentrate as it were, the powers of his Spirit and set the whole upon a creature that his own hands hath made!—a creature that had revolted and rebelled, and at the best is worthless still! Oh! sing of this, ye spirits before the throne; we cannot speak of it to-day as we would. All this is "in the beloved." We are not accepted anyhow else but "in the beloved." Let me show you that this is the best way in the world to be accepted. Each of us know it is the only way; but even if there were another, it is the best way. Suppose we could be accepted in ourselves. Adam was while he was obedient—he was accepted in his own works. Ay; but how soon he fell! and then his acceptance fell too. He stood on his own feet, and therefore he soon fell to the ground. Suppose you and I had kept the law up till now. I think I hear you say, "Oh, I wish I had! I wish I could come before God as a perfectly righteous man." O soul! thou wouldst not be half so safe as thou art now in Christ. But if I had no sin, yet I would ask that I might be in Christ, for I might have sin some day, and then down

would go the goodly structure. For that which is built upon a fallible creature is built upon the sand; and if the structure had hitherto been without one rotten timber, yet, since the basis is the will of man—and that might change—damnation might shortly overtake us. After all, we had done better, surely, to stand in Christ, who cannot fall. Now, I know some professors, who seem to me to stand in their own experience, to be accepted in their own experience. At least, that is their apprehension. Just now they had such visits from Christ's faith, such gleams of his love; and now they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! I have seen these same persons next day feel their souls cleave to the earth, and they have said, "Now, I am not accepted." O that these beloved ones would but know that God never did accept them in their experience he accepted them in Christ; and he never can reject them till he rejects them in Christ, which cannot be, since he cannot reject Christ. I would that they would see that their "ups" make them no higher before God, and their "downs" make them no lower—that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father's sight; but that they stand accepted in one who never alters, in one who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always complete, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Blessed faith, that walks above experience! Joyous trust, that in the darkest nights still sings of heaven's unclouded noon, and in the midst of blackness and vileness consciously felt, still boasts of pardon bought with blood, of righteousness complete and without flaw!

The Arminians say our being accepted before God, if I understand it aright, is also an acceptance in our graces. This is the English of their doctrine of falling away. While a man walks worthily, God accepts him; if he walks sinfully, then God accepts him no more. Those of you who like this way of being accepted, may choose it; for my part, I feel there is nothing can ever satisfy the craving of my spirit but an acceptance which lies utterly and wholly out of me, and only and entirely in Christ Jesus. Why, brethren, we should be accepted one day and non-accepted the next; nay, more, we might be accepted one minute and non-accepted the next. If it lay in anything whatever in our walk, or in our work, we should be in the covenant and out of the covenant fifty times a day. But I suppose the Arminians have a difference between sin and sin. Surely, they must have the old Romish distinction between venial and mortal sin; for if sin puts a man out of Christ, I wonder when he is in, since we are sinning day by day. Perhaps there is a certain quantity of sin required to do it; then that is only the old Romish dogma revived; some sins, mortal on the Arminian theory, so as to put a man out of grace, and other sins venial, so that they can keep in grace and sin too. I glory in my God that I know—

> "Once in Christ in Christ for ever,
> Nothing from his love can sever."

If my good works had put me into Christ, then my bad works might turn me out of him; but since he put me in when I was a sinner, vile and worthless, he will never take me out, though I am a sinner vile and worthless still.

"Unchangeable his will,
Though dark may be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same:
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

Now, Christian, I want thee this morning, to rejoice in this: thou art accepted "in the beloved." Thou lookest within, and thou sayest, "There is nothing acceptable here!" Man, look at Christ, and see if there is not everything acceptable there. Thy frame depresses thee, but look thou to Jesus and hear him cry, "It is finished!" Will not that death-note re-assure thee? Thy sins trouble thee; but remember they were laid upon the scape-goat's head of old, and they no more exist, for he has cast thy sins behind his back, and thrown them into the depths of the sea.

"In thy surety thou art free! His dear blood was shed for thee!
With thy Saviour's garments on, holy as the Holy One."

Whilst thou hast still to bear groans, and doubts, and fears; to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, thou art still accepted in the beloved. Never accepted in thyself; never anything but a condemned sinner in thyself; never anything but accursed both of God, and of the law out of Jesus. But in Christ never accursed; in Christ never condemned; for he that believeth in him is not condemned, and he that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God. "Accepted in the beloved!" This sentence seems to me to be such a mouthful; it is a dainty all your own. Let it lie in your mouth like a wafer made with honey. "Accepted in the beloved!" How I pity you who cannot say this. How I rejoice with you who can? You have troubles, you say: what are your troubles? You are accepted in the beloved. You tell me you have to fight with flesh and blood: what of that, so long as you are accepted in the beloved? But you are so poor, you say, and you have to go home to a miserable meal to-day: but then, how rich you are, you are accepted in the beloved. The devil is tempting you: never mind, he cannot destroy you, for you are accepted in the beloved. Even the glorified souls are not more accepted than we are. They are only accepted in heaven in the beloved, and so are we. I have often thought that if the children of God could fall from grace on earth, they could certainly fall from glory in heaven. What is there that keeps them holy in heaven? Is it their own will? If so, the heavenly saints may become hellish fiends. Brethren, it is Christ that keeps them; they are in Christ, therefore they cannot fall: so are we in Christ, therefore shall we never fail nor fall away, but unto the end shall we endure.

III. Now, one minute upon the last point; that is, DIVINE OPERATIONS. "*He hath made us* accepted in the beloved."

Do not you see, beloved, the whole way through, it is all of God and not of man. It was Christ who at first put us in his heart to be accepted there. It was the Father who put us in his book according to the good pleasure of his own will to be accepted there. It was Christ that took us into his hand, according to his suretyship engagement, that we might be accepted there. It is Christ that took us into his

loins, begetting us again unto a lively hope that we might be accepted there. And it is grace that has united us with the person of Christ that we may stand accepted there. You see it is all of God from first to last. Jonah learned sound divinity when he went into the whale's belly, for he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." And before the throne of God in heaven they always sing sound theology, for a part of the song is, "Salvation unto God and unto the Lamb." Not of man, neither by man; not of the will of man, nor blood, nor birth; but according to the counsel of him that worketh all things according to the good pleasure of his will. Sinner! does that suit you? You that are not in Christ in your own experience, does that suit you? It ought to do so. If you had to put yourself into Christ you could not do it. Men and women, if God asked anything of you to qualify you for Christ, you could not do it. But he asks nothing of you whatever. His mercy comes to you, not when you have made yourselves alive, but while you are yet dead. It comes to you, not merely when you seek it, but it first seeks you and makes you seek it.

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee;
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

This is the good point about it, that it is most free. And this is the gospel I am sent to preach to you this morning:—"He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." Sinner, if thou trust in Christ this morning, that act of faith shall be a point of union between thee and Christ, and thou shalt be in him vitally. Trust Christ, then, soul. "Well," you say, "I have nothing; I have no reason to be satisfied, for I have no good works; but here evidently is a plan of salvation that does not want anything from me. I accept it." Say in thy heart this morning, "If the Lord had asked any doings, or willings, or feelings of me in order that I might be in Christ, such a lost soul as I am, I could do none of these things; but when he tells me to believe in Christ, my soul perceives that he is able to save, and I know Christ is willing, and therefore I will trust him this day." Soul, if thou hast done this, thou art in Christ, thou art accepted in the beloved this morning. There may be a man that came in here a drunkard or a thief, that may yet go out of this place accepted in the beloved. There may have come in here a woman of evil name; but if she believe in Christ she shall go out accepted in the beloved. She came in here in her own conscience condemned; she shall go out justified if she believe in Christ. If thou canst see Christ die and trust him, and if thou canst see Christ risen and trust him; if thou canst see him pleading and can trust him, then thou art one with him—God hath made thee accepted in the beloved. Oh, precious salvation that comes all the way to where you are. Let you be where you may, so long as you are not in torments and not in hell, this salvation comes to your door. God give thee grace to lay hold of it now, or the rather that it may lay hold of thee: and do thou say,

"I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me,
That on the cross he shed his blood
From sin to set me free."

And if thou believest in him, thy eternal life is sure, because thou art one in him, and "accepted in the beloved."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BELIEVERS—LIGHTS IN THE WORLD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."—Philippians ii. 14—16.

We shall be very far from the truth if we suppose that Christian precepts have suffered any degeneration of meaning. If we imagine that the precepts of the gospel were more stern in apostolic times than in these later ages, we labour under a very gross and dangerous delusion. Fresh from the abominations of heathenism, the early converts would naturally be placed under the mildest rules, rather than the more severe. If the gospel could have known a change, the apostle would have given its easiest precepts at the first, and then in these better days, the whole revelation would have been brought out, and more stringent precepts would have been proclaimed. Since, however, it is contrary to the genius of the gospel to be progressive in its revelation, since it was all revealed at once, we must never imagine that the precepts given by Paul may be toned down and diluted to suit the present age. I say again, brethren, if these men, fresh from the foul Stygian ditch of heathen abomination and lasciviousness, were nevertheless exhorted to the greatest sublimity of holiness, much more is it incumbent upon us to arrive at a very high state of Christian perfection, and walk very near to God, and be very close imitators of Christ. May God help us to hear this morning, the address which Paul gave to the Church in Philippi; may we feel its full force in our consciences, and embody its full meaning in our lives.

The apostle says, "*Do all things,*"—by which he seems to teach the activity of the Christian Church, for the Christian religion is not mere thinking or feeling, but doing and working for God. "*Do all things without murmurings,*" without murmuring at *God's providence*—which was a common vice of the heathen, who, on their tombstones often recorded their protest against God for having removed their darlings, and upbraided him as cruel and unkind for taking away their relatives. "Do all things without murmurings *against one another.*" Let your love be so hearty and sincere, that ye do not envy your richer or more talented brethren. Let there be no low whispers travelling through your assemblies against those who ought to be esteemed among you. Whatever ye

do, let no murmuring be mixed with it, but labour with delight, and suffer with patience. Let there be no murmurings even against *the ungodly world.* If they be unjust, bear their injustice in silence; be not always offering complaints; there are a thousand things which ye might speak of, but it is better that like Aaron ye should hold your peace. To suffer in silence shall dignify you and make you greater than ordinary manhood, for then you shall become like Him, who before his accusers opened not his mouth.

The apostle continues, do all things without "*disputings.*" Dispute not with God; let him do what seemeth him good. Dispute not with your fellow Christians, raise not railing accusations against them. When Calvin was told that Luther had spoken ill of him, he said, "Let Luther call me devil if he please, I will never say of him but that he is a most dear and valiant servant of the Lord." Raise not intricate and knotty points by way of controversy. Remember, you have adversaries upon whom to use your swords, and therefore there is little need that you should turn their edges by dashing at the armour of your fellows. Dispute not even with the world. The heathen philosophers always sought occasions for debate; be it yours to testify what God has told you, but court not controversy. Be not ashamed to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but never do it in a spirit of mere debating, never because you wish to gain a victory, but only because ye would tell out what God hath bidden ye reveal.

"*That ye may be blameless.*" Men *will* blame you, but you must seek as Christians to lead lives that give no occasion for blame. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Erasmus writes of his great adversary Luther, "Even Luther's enemies cannot deny but that he is a good man." Brethren, force this encomium from an unwilling world. Live so that as in Tertullian's age, men may say as they did in his time, "Such-and-such a man is a good man, even though he be a Christian." The heathens thought the Christians the worst of men, but were compelled to confess them to be the best, even though they were Christians. "Be ye blameless *and harmless,*" says the apostle. The Greek word might be translated "hornless," as if ye were to be creatures not only that *do* no harm, but *could not do any;* like sheep that not only *will not* devour, but *cannot* devour, for it were contrary to their nature; for they have no teeth with which to bite, no fangs with which to sting, no poison with which to slay. If ye carry arrows let them be dipped in love; if ye bear a sword let it be the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; but otherwise, be ye everywhere, even among those that would harm you, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." "*As the sons of God,*" the apostle goes on to say, as if the dignity of our relationship should beget in us an equally dignified deportment. "Remember," saith the old philosopher—"Remember, O Antigonus, that thou art a king's son!" Remember, O Christian, that thou art a son of the King of kings—even God himself. Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not those eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in his beauty—let not those feet be defiled in miry places, which are soon to walk the

golden streets—let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are soon to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy. As "the sons of God," remember that the eyes of all are upon you; more is expected from you than from other men, because ye have a higher pedigree, for ye are descended from the very Highest himself, and therefore should be the highest and best in the world. The apostle then adds, "*without rebuke.*" Men whom the world cannot rebuke. Men who can stand right straight up, and defy their enemies to find any real fault in them, who can say without any Phariseeism, as Job did, "Lord, thou knowest that I am not wicked." My brethren, I would ye were such that men must lie before they can revile you; I would have you men upon whose snow-white garments filth will not stick—who may be, and must be slandered, but cannot be really rebuked. O beloved, to use Paul's own words, "Be ye sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

I have expounded the address of Paul, permit me to remind you, that all the while he is telling us to do this as the means to an end—and what is the end? why, that we may "shine as lights in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." The means themselves are precious; to be "holy, harmless, and undefiled," is a glorious matter of itself, but when such a bright thing becomes but a means, how excellent must the end be! How desirable that you and I, and each one of us who have named the name of Jesus, should "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life!"

This brings me to the subject which I want to impress upon your hearts this morning. I would that every believer here, whether member of this Church or of any of the part of Christ's family, might see to it, that henceforth he should shine as a light in the midst of the darkness of this world, giving light to those that come within the range of his influence. There seems to me to be four things about which I may well speak. First, here is *publicity required*—they cannot shine without it; here is, secondly, *usefulness intended;* here is, thirdly, *position indicated*—they are "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;" and here is, fourthly, *an argument suggested*, that in the day of Christ I may rejoice that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

I. First then, here is A MEASURE OF PUBLICITY REQUIRED.

You will note the text says they are to be *lights;* now how they can be lights without being seen, and of what use they would be if they could be unseen lights I cannot tell? But then, they are to *shine*, and how can they shine unless there be some radiance proceeding from them, and how this if they live in secret, and if they are never understood to be Christians at all? But then, where does the text say they are to shine as lights?—in their house? No, "*in the world.*" True they are to be lights in their own family; but moreover if they come up to the full standard of what they should be, they are to be lights *in the world.* These three words—lights, lights shining, and lights in the world, most positively teach that a Christian must have some degree of publicity, and that it is hardly possible for him to carry out his true character if he lives in such retirement and secrecy as never to be known to be a Christian. Some timid hearts there be, some gentle

spirits, that shun altogether the exposure of their religion; they quote Nicodemus as if they did not know that Nicodemus is rather a beacon than an example. I would be far from crushing a tender spirit, far from laughing at the nervousness which may keep a man in the back rank when he ought to stand in the fore-front of the battle; but if I should by some Scriptural remarks lead Christians to see that they are not to be always seeking retirement, but that they must stand out and avow the Master, and if I can persuade the gentle spirit to bear its willing witness to Christ, thrice happy shall I be. Pharisees of old courted publicity. They could not give away one halfpenny in the street but they must sound a trumpet that everybody might see their splendid charity. They could not pray in their closet, but they must seek some corner of the street that every passer-by might hold up his hands in amazement at the man who was so good that he prayed even in the street. The world has found this trick out; we usually say of ladies, when we find them working out at parties, that they do not work at home; and we should surely think of people who pray in the streets that they pray nowhere else, and of persons who show their charity publicly that they show all that they have to show. Ostentatious religion now-a-days is soon discovered and detected. But while we must be warned against the pride of the Pharisee, we must take care that we run not into another extreme. "Am I always to serve God by stealth? Am I never to speak a good word for Christ lest somebody should say I am proud?" Your own conscience will be your guide in that matter. If you detect in yourself any desire to glorify yourself, then you are wrong in making your religion public at all. Plainly, if you discover that you are keeping back in order to get an easier path for yourself, then you are grievously wrong in seeking to hide your religion. If it be for God's honour for you to publish on the house-tops what he has told you in the closet, do it; and if it be for Christ's honour to do only in the closet that which another man would do in the street, do it. Your conscience will always teach you, if it be an enlightened conscience, when you might act ostentatiously, and when on the other hand you would be cowardly. I think there is no difficulty in steering between this Scylla and Charybdis. Any man with a little wisdom will soon discern what he ought to do. But do not, I pray you, make the Pharisee's pride an excuse for your cowardice; never say, "I do not like to make a profession because there are so many hypocrites!" the more reason why *you* should make a profession that there may be some honest ones. Do not say, "Oh, I would not for fear people should think I am proud!" Why should you look at the fear of man which bringeth a snare; is it not yours to obey God rather than man?

I cannot understand Christ's words, "Ye are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid;" nor these, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;" nor these, "He that with his mouth confesseth, and with *his* heart believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved."—I cannot understand these passages, if you are never to avow your faith, but keep your religion hidden up in a secret place, and go to heaven by stealth. How much of publicity then, do we really think is necessary in a

Christian? It is becoming that *he should make a public avowal of his faith;* he should come out from among the world and declare himself to be on the Lord's side. There is an ordinance which God has himself ordained, which is the proper way in which to make this profession—to be baptized in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; thus openly being buried in water to show our death to the world, and rising out of the water to show that we hope to live a new life as the result of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If you should differ as to the form in which this profession is to be made, yet the profession should be made. If you would be honest and true, you must in answer to the Master's summons, "Who is on the Lord's side?" come out and say, "Here am I, Lord, I am thy servant, and I would serve thee even to the end." You should also be *associated constantly with Christian people.* The one act of profession is not enough, it should be continued by union with some visible Church of Christ. We find in the apostle's days that those who were converted were added to the Church. It is written, "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." Christianity requires you to unite yourselves with those who are united to Christ. If the Church of Christ be the spouse of Jesus, you should seek to be a member of her visibly as well as invisibly; especially you that are lately converted, for your presence in the Church is for your good, and much for the Church's comfort. The man that was healed stood with Peter and John; and it is written, when they saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. The gathering together of the converts to sustain the minister is a very great help in the propagation of the truth as it is in Jesus. Beside this association with Christians, there should be *a daily carrying out of your Christianity in your life.* It is not all that we *say* that shines; that may be only a flash, a sparkle, a display of fireworks, but it is our daily acting which is the true shining out of Christ within. Let the servant prove her Christianity by being more attentive than any other. Let the master prove his by being more generous than any other master; let the rich man shine in his liberality; let the poor man shine in his patience; let each in every sphere seek to excel those who are not in Christ, that so everyone may prefer us in our position to the worldling in the same office, and take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and have learned of him. But to shine as lights, we must add *the open testimony of our words.* I will not give a rusty nail for your religion if you can be quiet about it; I do not believe you have any; that which is nearest to the heart is generally most on the tongue. You must be constantly bearing your witness by the word of your mouth for Christ, seeking to teach the ignorant, to warn the careless, to reclaim the backsliding, and to bring the wanderers to the cross. You will have many opportunities in the sphere in which you move, avail yourself of them all, so shall you shine as a light in the *world;* and there are times when you cannot shine without *a very bold and stern decision for Christ.* When the old Roman senator, in the days of Vespasian, was told by the emperor that he might go into the senate-house but he must hold his tongue, he answered, "I, being a senator,

feel impelled to go into the senate-house, and being in the senate it is the part of a senator to speak what his conscience dictates." "Then," said Vespasian, "if you speak you will die." "Be it known to thee, O emperor," said he, "that I never hoped to be immortal, nor did I ever wish to live when I might not speak my mind." Brave Roman! We must have brave Christians, too, who say, "Being a Christian, it is mine to speak, and if that should cost me all I have, and life itself, I never thought myself immortal, and I wish to die when I may not speak out that which God has written in my heart." There are times, I say, when if we should falter, or delay, we become traitors at once; beware ye in these "crises of your being," that promptly ye follow your Lord.

So much of publicity I think is needed then—an open profession, a constant association with the Christian Church, a perpetual living out of godliness, an open declaration of the same, and a deliberate decision when occasion shall present itself. Look ye sirs, Christians are *soldiers*. If our soldiers were to take it into their heads that they ought never to be seen, a pretty pass things would come to; what were the soldiers worth when they shunned parade and dreaded battle? Take off your regimentals and be packing sirs! We want not men who must always be skulking behind a bush, and dare not show themselves to friend or foe. Christians are *runners* too, and what sort of runners are men who run in the dark. Not so saith the apostle, he says, we are "encompassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses," and therefore bids us "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us." What! a running match and no spectators! Ave Imperator! The champion salutes thee! He prays thee to dismiss the spectators. Conscript Fathers, leave your seats, and ye knights of the empire retire from the race. Ye common herd retire, or put your fingers to your eyes, here comes a runner who is so dainty that he cannot be looked at, a swift-footed racer who must be scrutinized by no vulgar eye or he will faint and lose the crown. Ha! ha! ha! ha! the mob laugh. "Ah!" say they, "these are not the men to make a Roman holiday, these timid fools had better play with babes in the nursery, they are not fit to consort with men." What think ye of Christians who must have the stadium cleared before they can enter the course. Rather, O sons of God, defy all on-lookers. Crowd the seats and look on, ye angels, and men, and devils too, and see what ye will. What mattereth it to the Christian, for he is looking unto Jesus, he runneth not for you but for the reward, and whether ye look or look not, his zeal and earnestness are still the same, for Christ is in him and run he must, look on who will.

II. Secondly, here is in the text, USEFULNESS.

"Well," saith one, "if I were known to be a Christian what use would it be?" We will soon show you; one remark, however, I will make, the better Christian you are the more public you will be, but the less will be thought *of you*. You have noticed at night a star, it is only a little spark comparatively, but still it is very bright, and everybody says, "Do you see that star?" Yes, but there is a moon, why does not everybody say, "Look what a beautiful moon?" But they notice the star first, because it is not usual to see stars so brilliant. By-and-by, of a

moonlight night, you will hear people say, "What a lovely moon!" Now, in the daylight people do not say, "What a lovely sun!" No. "What a lovely landscape! What a beautiful view! Look at the tints of those trees now the sun is shining!" Just so the little Christian is like a star, bright in his little sphere. Others are like the moon, they excite admiration and attention to themselves; but a full-grown Christian, who should be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, though giving more light than either the moon or the star, would not be half so much looked at, for men would be looking at what he shed light upon rather than upon him; they would look to the doctrine that he taught rather than to how he taught it; they would be looking rather at the lesson of his life than at the life itself. So that if I should urge you to more and more publicity, it will not be for your sake, but that you may be more and more forgotten, while the truth is the more clearly seen.

But what is the use of lights, what is the use of Christians as lights? The answer is manifold. We use lights to *make manifest*. A Christian man should so shine in his life, that those who come near him can see their own character in his life, can see their sins, can see their lost estate; he should so live that a person could not live with him a week without knowing the gospel. His conversation should be such that all who are about him should perfectly understand the way to heaven; things that men will not see and cannot see without him, should be very clear wherever he is. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and they do not understand the Bible because they want light. Like Philip, we should be willing to sit in the chariot and instruct the passer-by, making manifest the meaning of God's Word, the power of God's Word, the way of salvation, the life of godliness, and the force of truth. May I ask each one of you, have you made men understand the gospel the better? "Ah," says one, "I left that to the minister." Then you have neglected your duty, repent of your great sin, and ask God now to help you to be making manifest to all persons who come near you their sin and the Saviour. The next use of a light is *to guide*. The mariner understands this. When our sailors, some years ago had a Nore light, they thought they were getting on marvellously, but when they had the Mouse, the Maplin, the Swin Middle, and all the other lights on the sands, they soon found navigation much easier than it had been before. Every Christian should light some part of the voyage of life, and there should not be a channel without its light. Blessed pole star! how many a slave hast thou guided from the swamps and whips of the South up to the country of the free. Blessed art thou, O Christian too, if thy light has led some soul to Jesus, to the land of the free, where the slave can never wear his fetters again. I hope that you have often, when men have scarcely known it, pointed them the way to Christ, by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Lights are also used *for warning*. On our rocks and shoals a lighthouse is sure to be erected. Christian men should know that there are plenty of false lights shown everywhere in the world. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure; they hoist the wrong light, be it yours and mine to put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and

tell what it leads to, that so we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world.

Lights also have a very *cheering* influence, and so have Christians. Late one night we had lost our way in a park not far from the suburbs of London, and we were walking along and wondering where we were. We said, "There is a light over there," and you cannot tell what a source of comfort that candle in a cottage window proved to us. I remember riding in a third class carriage, crowded full of people, on a dark night, when a woman at the end of the carriage struck a match and lit a candle; with what satisfaction everybody's face was lit up, as all turned to see it. A light really does give great comfort; if you think it does not, sit in the dark an hour or two. A Christian ought to be a comforter; with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart, he should have a cheering word for the sons of sorrow.

Light, too, also has its use in *rebuking sin*. I think our street gas-lamps are the best police we have; if those lamps were out we should need ten times the number of watchers, and there would be far more crimes. Why is it that thieves do not like the light?—because their dark deeds can only be done in darkness. And how is it ungodly men do not like Christians? Why, because they rebuke them; and just as lights tend to make a city safe and stop robberies and crime, so Christian men when they are in sufficient numbers to act upon the commonwealth, will make crime less common; certainly they will compel it to hide its deformity under the shadows of night, whereas, before it might have walked in the blaze of day with approbation. But the Christian is a light in a very peculiar sense, he is a *light with life in it*. Turn the lanthorn upon that dead man's face; you can see it cold and white, like the chiselled marble. Shoot the light right into his eye; he does not see; you cannot make him live by the power of any human light. But the believer is God's lanthorn, full of the Holy Ghost—and it happeneth often that through our testimony God shooteth into the eyes of the dead a light which makes them live, so that the darkness of Hades gives way to the brightness of glory, and the midnight darkness of the spirit is made to fly before the rising Sun of righteousness.

We have dwelt long enough upon the uses of these lights, and I may only say, in concluding that point, I wonder what is the good of a Christian, who is not thus useful to the world? He has a treasure, but he hoards it. What is the good of misers while they live? They are like swine which only eat—they are of no service till they die. Then they are cut up, and their estates are pulled into pieces, and perhaps some good may be gotten by those who get a flitch or rasher from them. Vile is the wretch who hoards gold, but what is he who hoards bread. The world is starving, and they hoard the bread of life. It is like manna—it breeds worms, and they cannot eat it themselves, but they will not give it to others. A religion that is no blessing to others, is no blessing to me—I am just laying up for myself a mass of putridity; it will never do my soul good, or else it would have compelled me to do good to others. But they are hoarding water, the living water; they are damming up the stream to keep enough for themselves, and what is it doing? It is covered with rank weeds; it breeds miasma;

it turns foul; all manner of loathsome creatures are in it. They are more foolish still, they are trying to hoard up the light, as if they would have any the less if they let others have it. Hoard up light as if there were only a scant supply. Infamous! Diabolical! I wish there were a stronger word than that," If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha," says Paul. And I question whether that dreadful anathema does not include within it those who do not love souls, and therefore prove they do not love Christ; for if they loved Christ they must love sinners; if they loved Jesus they must seek to extend his kingdom, and to let him see of the travail of his soul.

III. But time waits not for me, and I must proceed to touch with brevity upon the third point—POSITION INDICATED.

"But," says one, "I cannot shine, it is of no use talking about it, I am not in a position to do any good." The apostle anticipates you, he says "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." "If I were to remove from this," says one, "I might serve the Lord's cause, but I cannot where I am." But, dear friend, you are not to get out of it, you are to speak for your Lord where you are. In the midst of that crooked and perverse nation you are to shine as lights in the world. Your position teaches you three things. First of all, it should be *an incentive to you;* the worse the people are among whom you live, the more need have they of your exertions; if they be crooked, the more necessity that you should set them straight; and if they be perverse, the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth. The worse your position is, the more thankful you ought to be that you are in it. Where should the physician be but where there are many sick? Where is honour to be won by the soldier but in the hottest fire of the battle? Do not blame your position if you are an unprofitable servant, but lay the blame upon yourself. If you find it hard to do good where you are, it will be harder anywhere else. As the bird that wandereth from her nest so is the man that wandereth from his place. Lazy workmen find fault with their tools and employers. If you transplant a tree to make it produce more fruit, you may possibly succeed, but there are nine chances to one that you will kill it altogether.

Again, as you are in such a position, let it *administer a caution* to you. They are a crooked nation and perverse, do not wonder therefore if they hate your light and try to blow it out. Be the more anxious not to give them any unnecessary offence. Let your goodness be the only fault they can find in you. Ask the Lord to keep your lamp well trimmed for you; beseech him to protect it from their malicious breath. Be the more anxious to cultivate a close acquaintance with Christ, because a crooked nation would decoy you from him. Do not try to please men; make not the opinion of this generation your rule, for it is very crooked, and if you travel one way you will not please them unless you turn the other way and then turn again to humour their crooks. One is often amused to find one's self publicly abused for doing the very thing, the opposite of which one was abused for the week before; and sometimes in the same newspaper article you will now-a-days catch the writer first falling foul with you for doing one thing, and then falling foul with you for not doing it again. It is a crooked and perverse nation;

the man who tries to please man shall find himself in a labyrinth of the most mazy kind; he shall be a wretched time-server all his life, and a detestable hypocrite even to his death. Such a man, to use a rustic simile, is like a toad under a harrow, he will have to be crawling continually to escape the spikes on the right and the iron teeth on the left, and he will probably die a miserable death with the iron in his soul at the last. Be cautious, but be particularly cautious against excessive caution. Please the Lord, and let men please themselves.

Once more, while the eyes of perverse men should be an incentive and a caution to you, do not forget the *rich consolation* afforded by the fact that all the saints have endured the like trial. Are you in the midst of a crooked people? So was Paul; so the Church at Philippi; so all the saints. Remember that as they won their crowns in a strife which was none of their choosing, so must you. They were not carried on beds of down to heaven, and you must not expect to travel more easily than they. They had to hazard their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, and you shall not be crowned till you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The road of your pilgrimage will not be smooth if it be the way of apostles and prophets. Soft raiment, delicate nursing, dainty feeding, and luxurious ease, belong to the palaces of earth, but not to the company without the camp who bear their Lord's reproach. I charge ye, O servants of the Lord, and you who are members of this Church especially, stand fast, wait, watch, and wrestle. Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

IV. To conclude, there is an ARGUMENT SUGGESTED.

It is a very affectionate and touching one which I mean to take the liberty of applying to you, my beloved flock. "That I may not run in vain, nor labour in vain in the day of Christ." The apostle was the founder of the Church at Philippi; he had watched over them with all the anxiety of one who had planted and watered, and who looked for the increase. He therefore appealed to the affection which he knew they had for him. "I have run," argues the apostle, "with all men looking on and gazing, many of them hating and scoffing. I have run with all my might; would you have me run in vain? I have laboured, I have laboured more than they all," the apostle could say, "would ye have me labour for nought?" He knew the answer they would give him would be, "No, beloved Paul, we would see thee win the prize for which thou didst run, and reap the fruit for which thou didst labour." "Well," argues the apostle "but I cannot, except ye shine as lights in the world; ye disappoint my hopes, ye snatch the prize from my grasp, ye fill me with anguish, if ye be not holy, heavenly-minded witnesses for Christ." I use the same argument with you; to the stranger here to-day it will have no force, but with many of you I know it will be an argument of power. How many out of this congregation first learned of Jesus from my lips. A multitude of you were brought to Christ through the preaching of the Word here, or in Park Street, or the Surrey Gardens, or Exeter Hall. The Word was feebly preached in rough language then as now,—but God owned it,—not to tens nor twenties, but to hundreds, ay, to thousands of you, and not to you only, but to people in every land

and of every kindred. The Lord hath made my spiritual children so many as the stars of heaven for multitude. I rejoice, yea, I must rejoice, when I hear continually of the multitudinous conversions which are wrought by the Holy Ghost through the sermons both printed and preached. God is with us, and he does not let one word fall to the ground. But what if you, as a Church, should be idle! What if your lives should be unholy! What if you should want zeal and faith to testify for Christ! What then! My best expectations are defeated, my life has been a failure, and all that I have done falls to the ground. I have thought it in my heart, and I earnestly pray to my God that it may come to pass that here, as in a barracks, a great army may find its constant lodging place, that afterwards the Lord may pour you out like a vast conquering host, upon all parts of the world, to teach and testify, and live and labour, and speak for Christ. Surely, my brethren, you would desire this yourselves. I pray for it, you will unite in desiring it and praying for it with me.

It has happened of late, especially to me, to see God's hand very visibly. Never in my experience have I seen so much spiritual activity as just now, and while it is true of all sections of the Christian Church, it has been peculiarly so of that section over which it is my lot to preside. The sermons have been now for eight years scattered in English, Welsh, French, Dutch, German, Swedish—in fact, in all Protestant languages. At first there were many conversions—there are still. Next I find that those who were regular subscribers to the sermons begin to receive the doctrine of the preacher. The converts to Christ grow and get clear views of truth. Even in the point of baptism there are great numbers who are convinced that it is most Scriptural that believers only should be baptized. Very many have come here, and in the pool beneath, I have baptized them into the name of Christ. Our denomination does not increase. I am not very anxious that it should, for as it stands at present I have no great love for it; but our principles are spreading marvellously, and in this I must rejoice. As the result of this I have constantly letters like this, "Sir, I live in a village where the gospel is not preached, there is a Church, it is true, but we have a Puseyite clergyman; cannot you do something for us. You have many young men training for the ministry, could you not send a friend to preach in my drawing-room?" Then comes another—"Sir, the chapel has been shut up in our village a long time, could you not come and help us?" Then there are many of this kind: two Christian men write up, wishing to be baptized into Christ—they come, they go back, within a month there are four more from the same village—they go back, and I almost forget them, but they do not forget me; soon, the whole six will write a letter—this is a common thing—and say, "Could not we be formed into a Church? we will find a room—send some one to preach to us?" This happens every week, and your minister feels that as long as ever he has a man, he will say, "I will do it for you;" and as long as he has any money of his own, he will say, "Oh, yes, I will do it for you;" but every now and then he wishes that he had some who would stand by him in larger attempts. Cheerfully you give week after week for the support of our young ministers, and I think our friends will continue to do this. At any rate the

Lord will provide, and friends far away may be moved to assist us. I want still more aid, for the field is ripe and we want more harvest men to reap it. It grows, the thing grows, every day it increases, it started but as a little flake of snow, and now like an avalanche it sweeps the Alps' sides bare before its tremendous force. I would not now that ye should prove unworthy of the day in which ye live, or the work to which God has called us as a Church. Four Churches of Christ have sprung of our loins in one year, and the next year shall it not be the same, and the next, and the next, if the Holy Ghost be with us, and He has promised to be with us if we be with Him.

Now, in regard to the particular effort at Wandsworth, for which a collection is to be made. When I was sore sick some three years or more ago, I walked about to recover strength, and walking through the town of Wandsworth, I thought "How few attend a place of worship here. Here are various Churches, but there is ample room for one of our own faith and order, something must be done." I thought "If I could start a man here preaching the Word, what good might be done." The next day, some four friends from the town called to see me, one a Baptist, and the three others were desirous of baptism, "Would I come there and form a Church?" We took the large rooms at a tavern, and preaching has been carried on there ever since. Beginning with four, the Church has increased to one hundred and fifty. I have greatly aided the interest by going there continually and preaching and helping to support the minister. Now, a beautiful piece of ground has been taken, and a chapel is to be erected, and I firmly believe there will be a very strong cause raised. We have many rising Churches, but this one has just come to such a point, that a house of prayer is absolutely needed. I should not have asked you for this aid so soon, but the rooms in which they worship are now continually used for concerts on Saturday evenings, and are not altogether agreeable on the Sunday. I would just as soon worship in one place as another, for my own part, but I see various difficulties are now in the way, which a new chapel will remove. I hope you will help them in so doing, help me in the earnest effort of my soul to hold forth the word of life, and to let Christ's kingdom come and his will be done.

You that feel no desire to honour the Master—you that care nothing for the spread of his kingdom—you that are satisfied to hold your heads down, and not boast and glory in him—stand back and assist us not; but you who would help his kingdom—you who love his name—you who are the debtors of his grace—help the cause everywhere, and help it this day. For Christ's sake I ask it of you, and you will not deny me.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOOD NEWS FOR YOU.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was."—Luke x. 33.

THE good Samaritan is a masterly picture of true benevolence. The Samaritan had no kinship with the Jew, he was purely of foreign origin, yet he pities his poor neighbour. The Jews cursed the Cuthites, and would have no dealings with them, for they were intruders in their land. There was nothing therefore, in the object of the Samaritan's pity that could excite his national sympathies, but everything to arouse his prejudices, hence the grandeur of his benevolence.

It is not my intention this morning, to indicate the delightful points of excellence which Christ brings out in order to illustrate what true charity will perform. I want you only to notice this one fact, that the benevolence which the Samaritan exhibited towards this poor wounded and half-dead man, was available benevolence. He did not say to him, "If you will walk to Jericho, then I will bind up your wounds, pouring in the oil and wine;" or, "If you will journey with me as far as Jerusalem, I will then attend to your wants." Oh, no, he came "where he was," and finding that he could do nothing whatever for his own assistance, the good Samaritan began with him there and then upon the spot, putting no impossible conditions to him, proposing no stipulations which the man could not perform, but doing everything for the man, and doing it for him as he was and where he was.

Beloved, we are all quite aware that a charity of which a man cannot avail himself, is no charity at all. Go among the operatives of Lancashire, and tell them that there is no necessity for any of them to starve, for on the top of Mt. St. Bernard there are hospitable monks who keep a refectory, where they relieve all passers-by; tell them they have nothing to do but to journey to the top of the Alps, and there they will find food enough. Poor souls! they feel that you mock them, for the distance is too great. Penetrate one of our back streets, climb up three pair of stairs into a wretched room, so dilapidated that the stars look between the tiles, see a poor young girl dying of consumption and poverty, tell her if you dare, "If you could get to the sea-side, and if you could eat so much beef-steak, you would no doubt recover." You are shamefully laughing at her—she cannot get these things—they are

beyond her reach: she cannot journey to the seaside—she would die ere she reached it. Like the wicked, your tender mercies are cruel. I have noticed this unavailing charity in hard winters. People give away bread and soup tickets to poor people, who are to give sixpence, and then receive soup and bread; and often I have had persons come to me—"Sir, I have a ticket; it would be worth a great deal to me, if I had sixpence to go with to get the relief; but I have not a farthing in all the world, and I cannot make out the good of giving me this ticket at all." This is hardly charity. Think you see Jeremiah, down in the low dungeon: if Ebed-melech and Baruch had stood over the top of the dungeon, and called out to him, "Jeremiah, if you will get half way up, we will pull you out," when there was not a ladder, nor any means by which he could possibly get so far, how cruel would have been this charity; but, instead thereof, they took old rags from under the king's treasury, and put them on ropes, and bade him put the rags under his armholes, and sling his arms through the ropes, and then they pulled him up all the way. This was available charity; the other would have been hypocritical pretence. Brethren, if in the description of a good Samaritan, Christ hits him off to the life, as giving to this poor wounded man a charity of which he could avail himself, does it not seem to be strongly probable—nay, even certain—that when Christ comes to deal with sinners, he gives them available mercy—grace which may be of real service to them.

Hence, permit me to say, I do not believe in the way in which some people pretend to preach the gospel. They have no gospel for sinners as sinners, but only for those who are above the dead level of sinnership, and are technically styled *sensible* sinners. Like the priest in this parable; they see the poor sinner, and they say, "He is not conscious of his need, we cannot invite him to Christ;" "He is dead," they say, "it is of no use preaching to dead souls;" so they pass by on the other side, keeping close to the elect and quickened, but having nothing whatever to say to the dead, lest they should make out Christ to be too gracious, and his mercy to be too free. The Levite was not in quite such a hurry as the priest. The priest had to preach, and might be too late for the service, and therefore he could not stop to relieve the man; besides, he might have soiled his cassock, or made himself unclean; and then he would have been hardly fit for the dainty and respectable congregation over which he officiated. As for the Levite, he had to read the hymns; he was a clerk in the church, and he was somewhat in a hurry, but still he could get in after the opening prayer, so he indulged himself with the luxury of looking on. Just as I have known ministers say, "Well, you know we ought to describe the sinner's state, and warn him, but we must not invite him to Christ." Yes, gentlemen, you must pass by on the other side, after having looked at him, for on your own confession you have no *good* news for the poor wretch. I bless my Lord and Master he has given to me a gospel which I can take to *dead* sinners, a gospel which is available for the vilest of the vile. I thank my Master that he does not say to the sinner, "Come half way and meet me," but he comes "where he is," and finding him ruined, lost, obdurate, he meets him on his own ground, and gives him life and peace without

asking, or expecting him to prepare himself for grace. Here is, I think, set forth in my text, the available benevolence of the Samaritan; it is mine this morning, to show the available grace of Christ.

I. The sinner is WITHOUT MORAL QUALIFICATION FOR SALVATION, but Christ comes where he is.

I want, if I can, not to talk about this as a matter having to do with the multitude that are abroad, but with us in these pews. I speak not of *them* and *those*, but of *you* and *me*. I want to say to every sinner, "You are in a state in which there is nothing morally that can qualify you for being saved, but Jesus Christ meets you where you now are."

1. Remember first, that when the gospel was first sent into the world, *those to whom it was sent, were manifestly without any moral qualification.* Did you ever read the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans? It is one of those awful passages in Scripture, not intended to be read in congregations; but to be read and studied in the secrecy of one's chamber. The apostle gives a portrait of the manners and customs of the heathen world, so awful, that unless our missionaries had informed us, that it is exactly the photograph of life in Hindostan at the present moment, infidels might have declared that Paul had exaggerated. Heathendom in the time of Paul, was so desperately wicked that it would be utterly impossible to conceive of a sin, into which men had not fallen; and yet, "We turn unto the Gentiles," said the apostle; and yet the Lord himself commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." What! to Sodomites, whose very smallest sin is adultery, and fornication; to thieves and murderers, to murderers of fathers and mothers? Yes, go and preach the gospel *to them!* Manifestly, the fact that the world was steeped up to its very throat in the filth of abominable wickedness, and yet the gospel was sent to it, proves that Christ does not seek for any qualification of morality, or righteousness in man, before the gospel is available to him. He sends the Word to the drunkard, to the swearer, the harlot, the vilest of the vile; for such is the gospel of Christ intended to save.

2. Recollect again, *the Biblical descriptions of those whom Christ came into the world to save, which prove to a demonstration that he comes to the sinner where he is.* How does the Bible describe those whom Christ came to save? As men? No, my brethren; Christ did not come to save men as men, but men as sinners. As sensible sinners?—nay, I aver not; they are described as "*dead* in trespasses and sins." But to the law and to the testimony, let me read you one or two passages; and, while I read them, I hope you may be able to say, "There is hope for me." First, those whom Christ came to save are described in 1 Timothy, i. 15, and many other places, as "*sinners.*" "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Sinners," without any adjective before the word; not awakened sinners, not repenting sinners; but sinners as sinners. "Surely," saith one, "I am not shut out." Another account is found in Romans v. 6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died"—for whom? those who had some desires after God? some respect to his name? nay, "for *the ungodly.*" Now, an ungodly

man means a man without God, who cares not for God; "God is not in all his thoughts," and therefore he is not what men call a sensible sinner. "The ungodly are like "the chaff which the wind driveth away:" even these are the persons that Christ came to save. In the same chapter, 10th verse, you find them mentioned as "*enemies*"—"When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." What say ye to this? they are not described as friends. Christ laid down his life for his friends in one sense; "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Enemies to God were the objects of grace, so that in enmity Christ comes and meets man where he is.

In Ephesians ii. 1, we read of them as "*dead* in trespasses and sins"—"and you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Christ, then, does not ask the sinner to make himself alive; the gospel is not only to be preached to those who have some good notions, some good desires, some tremblings of the heavenly life within, but to the dead as dead; to the dead doth Christ come, and meet them in the grave of their sin. Again, (Ephesians ii. 3,) they are "*children of wrath*"—"we were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Yet the gospel came to such. Can ye see anything hopeful in a child of wrath? I ask you to look over him from head to foot, if this be his name and character; can ye see a spot of goodness as large as a pin's point in the man? And yet such Christ came to save. Once again, they are mentioned as "*accursed*." Ah," says one sinner, "I have often cursed myself before God, and asked him to curse me." Well, Christ died for the accursed; (Galatians iii. 13,) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for *us;*" that is, for us who were under the curse. And, once more, they are described by the dreadful word "*lost*." They are lost to all hope, to all consideration for themselves; even their own friends have given their case up as hopeless. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.) If I understand those passages which I have read in your hearing, they mean just this —that those whom Christ came to save have no good whatever in them to co-operate towards their salvation, and Christ doth not look upon them in order to find aught that is good in them. I am bold to say, the only fitness for cleansing is filthiness; the only fitness for a Saviour is being lost; and the only character under which we come to Jesus is as sinners, lost, dead, and accursed.

3. But, thirdly, it is quite certain from *the work of grace itself*, that the Lord does not expect the sinner to do anything or to be anything in order to meet him, but that he comes to him where he is. See, sinner, Christ *dies* on Calvary, a weight of sin is on his shoulders, and on his heart; in agonies the most awful he shrieks under the desertion of his God. For whom did he die? For the innocent? Wherefore for the innocent? What sacrifice did they need? For those who had some good thing in them? Why all these agonies *for such?* Surely a less price might do for them if they could eke it out themselves. But because Christ died on account of sin, I take it that those whom he died for must be viewed as sinners, and only as such. Inasmuch as he paid a

dreadful price, I gather that they must be dreadfully in debt, and that he died for those who had nothing to pay with. But Christ *rose again*, rose again for our justification. For whose justification? For the justification of those who were justified in themselves? Why this were to perform an unnecessary work. No, my brethren, but for those who had no justification of their own, not a shadow of any, who were condemned, utterly condemned on account of their own works. Moreover, I hear him by the ear of faith *pleading* before the eternal throne. Who does he plead for? For those who have something to plead on their own account?—that were needless. Do men give their money to the rich? Do they spend their charity on those who do not need it? If men have something to plead for themselves, then why does Christ plead for them? No, brethren, he pleads for those who have nothing whatever that they can bring as an argument with which to enforce their prayers. But Christ ascended and *received gifts*. Who for? For those who merited rewards? No, verily, let them get them for themselves. But he received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. But he *gives the Holy Spirit*. To whom does he give the Holy Spirit? To those that are strong, and good, and can do all themselves? O, my brethren, this were a work of supererogation; but he gives the Holy Spirit to those that are powerless, weak, dead; he gives the Holy Worker to those who are all unholy and full of sin; he puts the omnipotent influence into those who were slaves to the spirit of evil. Brethren, the work of Christ supposes a lost, ruined, rebellious sinner, and so I say, Christ meets the man where he is.

4. Yet more, for I would clear up this point before I leave it, *the godlike character of the grace of God* proves that he meets the sinner where he is. If God forgive little sinners only, then he is little in his mercy. If the Lord does not do something more than men can think, then we have made too much noise about the gospel, and have exalted the cross above measure. Unless there be something extraordinary in divine grace, then I cannot understand such a passage as this, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts." I venture to say, brethren, that many of us have thought of forgiving our enemies. It has sometimes been our happy portion to do good to them that hate us. Now, if God would be godlike in his grace—and I am sure he will—he must do something more than that; he must not only forgive his enemies, but they must be enemies of such an atrocious character that no *man* would have forgiven them.

> "Who is a pardoning God like thee,
> Or who hath grace so rich and free."

But where is the meaning of this boast, if the Lord merely pardons sinners who are sensible of their sins, and lament them? The marvel is in this, that while they are yet enemies he calls them by his grace, and invites them to mercy; yea, more, he blots out their sins, and makes them friends; thus meeting the sinner where he is.

5. *The spirit and genius of the gospel utterly forbid the supposition that God requires anything in any man in order to save him.* If salvation be

offered to man upon a condition, they who fulfil the condition have a claim to the blessing. This is the old covenant of works. The substance of the legal covenant is, "Do this and I will reward you." When the man has done it, he deserves what has been promised. Yes, and if you make the condition never so easy, yet, mark you, so long as it be a condition, God is bound by his own Word, the condition being fulfilled, to give man what he has earned. This is works and not grace; it is debt and not free favour. But, inasmuch as the gospel is free favour from beginning to end, I am absolutely sure that God asketh nothing; neither good wishes, good desires, nor good feelings of a sinner before he may come to Christ. But that he may know that everything is of grace, the rebel is commanded to come just as he is, bringing nothing, but taking everything from God, who is superabundant in mercy, and therefore meeteth the sinner just where he is.

I say to the sinner, wherever thou mayest be to-day, if thou be without any virtue, and if thou be filled with all vice, if there be no good points in thy character, but if there be everything that is bad against man and against God; if thou hast committed every crime in the catalogue, if thou hast ruined thy body and damned thy soul, yet still Christ hath said it, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And if thou comest to him, he can no more cast thee out than if thou hadst been the most virtuous, the most honourable, and the most devout of all living men. Only do thou to-day believe in the mercy of God, in Christ, and cast thyself on Him, and thou art saved to the praise and glory of that grace which meets thee just where thou art, and saveth thee from sin.

II. In the second place, there are very many of the lost race of Adam, who say that they are WITHOUT ANY MENTAL QUALIFICATION.

This is their excuse—"But, sir, I never was a scholar. I was sent out as a boy to earn my own living, so that I never had a week's schooling; I am so ignorant that I cannot read my book, and if anybody were to ask me to make a prayer I could not, I have not sense enough." Now, you see the Lord Jesus meets you just where you are. And how does he do this? Why, first, *the saving act is one that requires no mental power*. Faith lays hold on eternal life. Now, a child whose faculties are never so little developed can believe what it is told. The child cannot reason, cannot argue, cannot dispute, cannot split hairs, cannot see a knotty point in theology, but it can believe what it is told. Faith requires so little mental vigour or intellectual clearness, that there have been many who were idiots in other things, who have been made wise unto salvation by the act of faith in Christ. You remember our Lord's own words, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." But this never could have happened had not the act which brings us into communion with Christ been the lowest act of the human faculty, that of simply trusting to Christ, as the result of crediting that which is told us upon good testimony.

But then, again, to meet this defect of mental power, remember *the singular simplicity of that which is believed*. Is there anything more simple in the world than the doctrine of the atonement. We deserve to die, Christ dies for us; we are in debt, Christ pays for us. Is not

this plain enough for a Ragged School? It is so plain, that many of our learned doctors of divinity try to get it out of the Bible; they think, "If this be the marrow of it all, then any fool can be a theologian;" so they kick against it. What is Unitarianism but a stumbling at the simplicity of the cross. They were Unitarians who stood at the cross when Christ died; they said, "Let him come down from the cross and we will believe on him." That has been the Unitarian character ever since; they will receive Jesus anywhere but on his cross; but up there, dying in man's stead, he is so commonplace, that these great gentlemen run to philosophy and vain deceit sooner than lay hold on that which the commonest may as fully understand as they.

Yet more; to meet any mental deficiency in man, while the truth itself is simple, it is *taught in the Bible under such simple metaphors*, that none can say they cannot understand it. How simple is the metaphor of the brazen serpent, held up before the snake-bitten Israelites, while they are commanded to look and live. Who does not understand that a look at Christ who dies in the stead of men, will make them live? "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Who does not understand the figure of a fountain flowing in the streets, that every thirsty passer-by may put his lips down and drink? "Behold the Lamb of God." Who does not understand the sacrifice? Here is a lamb killed for the sin of Israel, and so Christ dies for the sin of those who believe in him. The act of faith is simple, the object of faith is plain; the metaphors make it clear, and he is without excuse who does not understand the gospel of Christ.

To crown all, to you, my beloved hearers, Christ *has given you abundance of teachers*. There sits in your pew with you to-day a man of your own rank and calling, who will explain to you the gospel, if you do not understand it. Here are many of us, who are but too glad if we can roll away the stone from the door of your sepulchre; here are children of God themselves saved by sovereign grace, and if you really do not know the way, do but touch your next neighbour, and say to him, "Can you explain to me yet more clearly what I must do to be saved?" Now, this is meeting you, let your brains be of the very smallest; this is coming down to you though you sit on the lowest step of human intellect. Jesus Christ meets you just where you are.

III. But yet again. I think I hear another say, "I am in despair, for I CANNOT FIND ANY REASON IN MYSELF, OR OUT OF MYSELF, WHY GOD SHOULD FORGIVE SUCH A PERSON AS I AM."

So then, you are in a hopeless state, at least you see no hope. The Lord meets you where you are, by putting *the reason of your salvation altogether in himself*. Shall I remind you of one or two texts which will surely satisfy you? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." What for? "For mine own sake." He cannot pardon you for your sake, you clearly see that; and you feel that he cannot pardon you for other people's sake; but for "*my own sake*," saith he, "that I may glorify myself." Not in you, but in his own mighty breast he finds the motive, that he may make his own mercy illustrious; for his own sake he will do it. Or take another—"For my name's sake, even for my name's sake, will I

defer mine anger, that I cut thee not off." Here it is again for his *name's sake*, as if he knew he could not find any other motive, so he puts it all on himself; he pardons that he may honour and glorify his own name. Sinner, thou canst not say that this does not meet thy case: for if thou be the most hellish good-for-nothing sinner that ever cursed God's earth, and polluted the air thou breathest, yet he can save thee, *for his own sake.* There still is room for thee to hope; for the bigger the sinner thou be the more glory to him if he saveth thee; and if salvation be given for a reason only in himself, there is therefore yet a reason by which he can save thee, even thee.

Remember, that *he puts his own design* before your eyes to show you that if you have no reason in yourself, that is no hindrance to his saving you. What is God's design in saving men? When he brings them to heaven, what will be the result of it? Why, that they may love and praise his name for ever, and sing "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory." You are just the man; if you are ever saved, and brought to heaven, oh, will not you praise his grace? "Yes," said one old man who had long lived in sin, "if he ever does bring me to heaven, he shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise him throughout eternity." Why, you are the man, do you not see, you are the very man that will answer God's design, for who shall love so much as he who has had much forgiven, and who shall praise so loudly as he whose mighty sins have been overcome by the mighty love and goodness and grace of God? Thou canst not say that it does not meet thee, for here is a motive and a reason, though thou canst find none in thyself.

Here is another reason why God should save thee, it is *His own Word*, the Word of him that cannot lie. I will bring up that text again; perhaps there is a heart here that will be able to cast anchor on it—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." You say, "But if I come, I can see no reason why he should save me." I answer, there is a reason in His own promise. God cannot lie. You come; he will not cast you out. He says, "I will in no wise cast out;" but you say, "He may for such-and-such a reason." Now, this is a flat contradiction; the two cannot stand. If there be anything that is necessary in order for a soul to come, and you come without it, yet there is the promise, and as it has no limit in it plead it, and the Lord will not refuse to honour his own Word. If he can cast you out because you have not some necessary qualification, then his Word is not true. Whoever you may be, whatever you may not be, and whatever you may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ, there is a reason in every attribute of God why you should be saved. His truth cries, "Save him, for thou hast said 'I will.'" His power says, "Save him, lest the enemy deny thy might." God's wisdom pleads, "Save him, lest men doubt thy judgment." His love says, "Save him;" his every attribute says, "Save him;" and even Justice, with its hoarse voice, cries, "Save him, for God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confess our sins."

I am trying to fish in deep waters after some of you that have long escaped the net. I know when I have given free and full invitations, you have said, "Ah! that cannot mean me." You are without faith in

Christ, because you think you are not fit. I will be clear of your blood this morning; I will show you that there is no fitness wanted, that you are commanded now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as you are, for Jesus Christ's gospel is an available gospel, and comes to you just where you are. Without moral or mental qualification, and without any sort of reason why he should save you, he meets you as such, and bids you trust him.

IV. We proceed to our fourth point. "Oh," says one, "but I am WITHOUT COURAGE; I dare not believe on Christ, I am such a timid, trembling soul, that when I hear that others trust to Christ I think it must be presumption; I wish I could do the same but I cannot, I am kept under by such a sense of sin, that I dare not. O sir, I dare not, it would look as if I were flying in the face of justice if I were to dare to trust Christ, and then to rejoice in the pardon of my sin." Very well, Christ comes to meet you where you are, by very tender *invitations*. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." How sweetly he puts it to you. I do not know where more wooing words could be found, than those the Saviour uses. Will you not come when Christ beckons, when with his loving face streaming with tears, he bid you come to him. What! is an invitation from him too little a thing for you. O sinner, trembling though thou art, say in thy soul,

"I'll to the gracious king approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."

Knowing that you would neglect the invitation, he has put it to you in the light of a *command*. "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He thought you would say, "Ah, but I am not fit to accept the invitation." "Well," says he, "I will command the man to do it." Like a poor hungry man with bread before him, who says, "Ah, it would be presumption on my part to eat;" but the king says, "Eat, sir, or I will punish you." What a generous and liberal command; even the threat itself has no anger in it. Like the mother, who when the child is near to die, and nothing will save it but the medicine, and the child will not drink, she threatens the child, but only out of love to it that it may be saved. So the Lord doth add *threatenings* to commands; for sometimes a black word will drive a soul to Christ where a bright word would not draw it. Fears of hell sometimes make men flee to Jesus. The weary wing made the poor dove fly to the ark: and the thunderbolts of God's justice are only meant to make thee fly to Christ the Lord.

Beloved, once more, my Master has sweetly met your want of courage by bringing many others, so that you may follow their *example*. As fowlers sometimes have their decoy-birds, so my Master hath decoy-birds that are to draw others to him. Other sinners have been saved, others he has cleansed who did but trust him. There was Lot. Ah, Lot! guilty of drunkenness and incest, and yet a saint of God. David the adulterer and murderer of Uriah, and yet washed "whiter than snow." Manasseh the bloody persecutor, who had cut Esaias in two, sawing him in halves, and yet he was taken among the thorns, and God had mercy on him. What shall I say of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of God's people? and the robber dying on the cross for his crimes, and yet saved? Sinner, if these do not induce thee to come, what can overcome thy sinful diffidence? "But," says one, "you have not hit my case yet; I am an outrageous sinner!" Well now, I will hit it this time. In 1 Corinthians, vi. 9, hear the Word of the Lord, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you:* but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Why, brethren, what horrible descriptions there are here; there are some of them so bad that when we have read the description, we wish to forget the sin; and yet, and yet, glory be to thine Almighty grace, O God! such hast thou saved, and such thou canst save still. O, timid sinner, can you not trust in Jesus after this? Hear ye the Word of the Lord again (Titus iii. 3—5), "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved *us*." Now, you hateful sinners, and you that hate others; you that are full of malice and envy, here is the gate open even for you, for the kindness and love of God towards man appears in the person of Christ. Listen to another, for God's words are more than mine, and I do hope they will attract some of you (Ephesians ii. 1—3): "Dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by

grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What for? "That in the ages to come,"—mark this—he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." One more passage, and I will not weary your attention. O that this last passage might comfort some of you, it is Paul who speaks (1 Timothy i. 13), "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying," see how he puts it from his own experience, "and worthy of all acceptation;" and therefore worthy of yours, poor sinner; "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Ah" says one "but he would not save any more." Let me go on—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." So that if you trust as Paul did, you shall be saved as Paul was, for his conversion and salvation are a pattern to all those who should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting. So sinner, timid as you are, here Jesus meets you.

O, I wish I could say a word that would lead you poor tearful ones to look to Jesus. O, do not let the devil tempt you to believe that you are too sinful. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

"Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream."

Fitness is not needed—do but come to him. You are black, and you do not feel your blackness as you ought—that makes you all the blacker. Come, then, and be clean. You are sinful, and this is your greatest sin, that you do not repent as you ought; but come to him, and ask him to forgive your impenitence. Come as you are: if he rejecteth one of you, I will bear the blame for ever; if he casteth one of you away that shall trust him, call me a false prophet in the day of the resurrection. But I pawn my life upon it—I stake my own soul's interest on this—that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.

V. I hear one more complaint. "I am WITHOUT STRENGTH," saith one; "will Jesus come just where I am?" Yes, sinner, just where you are. You say you cannot believe, that is your difficulty. God meets you, then, in your inability. First, he meets you with *his promises*. Soul, thou canst not believe; but when God, that cannot lie, promises, will you not believe, can you not believe then? I do think God's promise—so sure, so stedfast—must overcome this inability of yours.

"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Cannot you believe now? Why, that promise must be true! But next, as if he knew that this would not be enough, he has taken *an oath* with it—and a more awful oath was never sworn—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel." Can you not believe now? What, will you doubt God when he swears it, not only make God a liar but—let me shudder when I say it—will you think that God can perjure his own self? God forbid you should so blaspheme. Remember, he that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not on the Son of God. Do not do this. Surely you can believe when the promise and the oath compel you to faith. But yet more, as if he knew that even this were not enough, he has given you of *his Spirit*. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Surely with this you can believe. "But," saith one, "I will try." No, no, do not try, that is not what God commands you to do; no trying is wanted; believe Christ now, sinner. "But," saith one, "I will think of it." Do not think of it, do it now, do it at once for this is God's gospel. There are some of you standing in these aisles and sitting in these pews, who I feel in my soul will never have another invitation, and if this be rejected to-day, I feel a solemn motion in my soul—I think it is of the Holy Ghost—that you will never hear another faithful sermon, but you shall go down to hell impenitent, unsaved, except ye trust in Jesus *now*. I speak not as a man, but I speak as God's ambassador to your souls, and I command you, in God's name, trust Jesus, trust *now*. At your peril reject the voice that speaks from heaven, for "he that believeth not shall be damned." How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation. When it comes right home to you, when it thrusts itself in your way, oh, if ye will neglect it how can ye escape? With tears I would invite you, and, if I could, would compel you to come in. Why will ye not? O souls, if ye will be damned, if ye make up your mind that no mercy shall ever woo you, and no warnings shall ever move you, then, sirs, what chains of vengeance must you feel that slight these bonds of love. You have deserved the deepest hell, for you slight the joys above. God save you. He will save you, if you trust in Jesus. God help you to trust him even now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH OMNIPOTENT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."—Mark ix. 28.

I MUST take your minds back to the scene in the midst of which Christ uttered these memorable words. Christ had been upon the mountain-top, transfigured in the presence of his three disciples. During his absence, the disciples remaining had been put to a nonplus. They found themselves, for want of faith, unable to work a miracle. And the Pharisees triumphed. Christ came down just at the very moment and turned the scale. We find a parallel case in the story of Moses, when with his servant Joshua he went up to the mountain and beheld the glory of the Lord. While he and Joshua were absent evil lifted up its head, and those who would walk by sight prevailed over the poor weak faith of Aaron, so that he made for them a golden calf; and lo, as Moses returned, he saw the people given up to the worship of this image which they could see with their eyes and handle with their hands. Faith had left the field routed, because the champion was not there, and sinful sight was for the moment triumphant. Moses dashes boldly into the midst of the people, and instantly they are put to confusion; some tremble, and the most brazen of them are made to hang their heads. He lays hold upon their molten calf, grinds it to powder, and makes them drink thereof. Now, our Lord with his Joshuas—Peter, and James, and John, the three elect out of the elect—had been on the mountain of transfiguration. The rest, like Aaron, found themselves attacked by those who would have signs and wonders; and being unable to furnish these signs and wonders for lack of faith, the Pharisees pushed their advantage, and the hosts of God seemed to fly before them. But suddenly, like a great King, Christ stands in their midst; the Pharisees are abashed; a miracle is performed; faith triumphs, and the doubters are shamed. Like some mighty general who, having been absent from the field of battle, finds that his lieutenants have rashly engaged in action and have been defeated; the left wing is broken, the right has fled, and the centre begins to fail; he lifts his standard in the midst of his troops, and bids them rally around him; they gather; they

dash upon the all-but triumphant foemen, and soon they turn the balance of victory, and make the late victors turn their ignominious backs to flight. Brethren, here is a lesson at the very outset. What we want for conquest is the shout of a king in the midst of us. The presence of Christ is victory to his Church: the absence of the Lord Jesus entails disgraceful defeat. O armies of the living God, count not your numbers; rely not upon your strength; reckon not upon the ability of your ministers; vaunt not in human might; nor on the other hand be ye dismayed because ye are few, nor tremble because ye are feeble; if He be with you, more are they that are for you than all they that are against you. If Christ be in your midst, there are horses of fire and chariots of fire round about you.

> "When he makes bare his arm,
> Who can his cause withstand?
> When he his people's cause defends,
> Who? who shall stay his hand?"

Lift up your eyes, then, to the hills, from whence Jesus cometh who is your help, and entreat him never to forsake his people, but to dwell with them, and walk among them for evermore.

The matter about which the dispute had arisen was this: a certain man had a demoniac son, who was afflicted with a dumb spirit, which threw him into convulsions and ravings of the most hideous kind. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavours of the disciples, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore when he was bidden to bring his son to him, he said to Jesus, "If thou canst do anything have compassion on us, and help us." Now there was an "if" in the question, but the poor trembling father had put the "if" in the wrong place. Jesus Christ, therefore, without telling him to retract the "if," just puts it in its legitimate position. "Nay, verily," he seemed to say, "there should be no 'if' about my power, nor about my willingness, the 'if' lies somewhere else." "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The man received faith, offering at the same time a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Christ spoke the word, and the devil was cast out with an injunction never to return. Brethren, you and I see that there is an "if" somewhere, but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place. *If* Christ can convert heathens? No, no, if the Church can believe he can. *If* Christ can make the ministry successful? Nay, *if* you can believe he can. *If* Christ can give me the pardon of sin, *if* he can give me high enjoyments, *if* he can lift me above doubts and fears? Not so, brethren—not so; you have misplaced your "if." It is if you can believe; for if you can, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you. Faith standeth in God's power, and in God's majesty; it weareth the royal apparel, and rideth on the king's horse, for it is the grace which the king delighteth to honour. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare, and to suffer. "All things," without limit, "are possible to him that believeth."

I shall, this morning, dwell upon *some of the achievements of faith*,

and then notice *where faith's great power lieth.* God help us to speak on both of these points with divine power.

I. First, SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAITH.

Time would fail me if I should attempt to rehearse the record of those who have earned a good report through faith. It is not necessary that my humble tongue should recapitulate what Paul, with inspired lips, has uttered in the ears of the Church. Turn to the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and see there a mighty triumphal arch which God the Holy Ghost has raised in commemoration of the splendid triumphs which faith has achieved. Behold this tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. With joy the Church recounts her worthies, for the Lord uttereth his voice before his army, for his camp is very great. But it needs not that I remind you of these ancient things, I will rather speak of some of the things which faith can perform to-day, even to-day.

1. First, we will consider faith in *its relationship to guilt.* Here we may say, in your hearing, if ye can believe guilt can be removed; perfect pardon and complete justification are possible to the vilest sinner, if he can believe in Christ. Behold, my brethren, faith going forth to conflict with sin. Mark for a moment its determined struggles, but see it coming back, like David, with Goliah's head in his hand—a mighty conqueror through the strength of its God. Faith in dealing with sin *does not forget the greatness of it.* Our sin is tremendous: it is not possible for us to over estimate its guilt. The sinner, under the most awful convictions, never exaggerated the evil of sin, it is a dreadful and a bitter thing; but faith dealeth thus with it. "What if my sin be great? I have a great Saviour; surely he is able to take my sin, even if it were a hundred times as great as it is, and to cast it all into the depths of the sea. I know that I have greatly revolted, and have sinned with many aggravations against my God; but I believe in his great mercy, and I know that he is able to blot out my sins like a cloud, and my transgressions like a thick cloud." Faith does not lessen sin in the estimate of a sinner; but it exalts Christ, so that the sinner firmly and fully believeth that if its sin could be multiplied by all the number of the elect, yet He who is mighty to save could roll all the burden away, and make him free. The greatness of sin is no barrier to its removing, if thou canst believe.

Many, also, are troubled with a consciousness of *the ill desert of sin.* They are made to look into hell; they seem to hear the wailings as they ascend from the place of torment. Such awful passages as these are in their troubled mind: "Tophet is prepared of old; the pile thereof is wood and much smoke." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." But faith says, "Yes; but despite all this, the agonies of Christ were so great that they are a fit and full expiation by which all these torments can be, by God's mercy, fully removed from those who trust in Jesus, and they can even mount to the upper skies." To know the desert of sin, and yet believe that Christ can pardon—this is faith's work. Not to make out sin to be a peccadillo, a small and trivial offence, but to confess that the full weight of God's eternal arm can be none too heavy to fall upon the man who has dared to insult his Maker's

laws, and despite all this to believe that the atonement made by blood upon the cross, was enough, and more than enough, to expiate all. This is the victory of faith—to know that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

Multitudes, also, I know, are very much vexed by remembering *what guilt has done* in them. "I am," saith such a one, "so hard-hearted, I have so little repentance, I am so prayerless, I have nothing good in me; I am everything that is vile; there is not a commendable thing in me to move the pity of God." Now, faith comes in and says, "It is even so; but, despite all this, I do believe the naked promise of God; I come to Jesus as I am, having nothing in myself, but possessing all things in Him." Nor will faith let the hardness of the heart, or the stubbornness of the will, be any argument why the soul should not rest on Christ, but believing all that could be laid to its charge, and sorrowfully repenting of it all, still faith says, "It is written, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' *I* come, and Jesus cannot, will not, cast me out." When I feel my soul softened, when I feel the motions of the living fire within, then to believe that Christ can save me is no great faith; but when I feel no spiritual life, when my heart is as hard as a nether millstone, and I see myself as corrupt as a dunghill, then to believe in Him that justifieth the ungodly; then to take the mercy which Christ gives to the very chief of sinners, this is a master-piece of faith; and herein faith maketh all things possible to him that believeth.

"In hope against all human hope,
Self desperate, I believe
Thy quickening word shall raise me up,
Thou shalt the Spirit give.

The thing surpasses all my thought,
But faithful is my Lord;
Through unbelief I stagger not,
For God hath spoke the word.

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries 'It shall be done.'"

Sinners also are greatly troubled when they are awakened, concerning *the future*. "You will sin again," says Satan, "just as you have done; all pretences to a new life will be signal failures; you will go, like the dog to his vomit; and return, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The quickened mind clearly perceives that this would inevitably be the result, if the work were to be performed by human strength; but faith denies the slander by looking to the Lord alone. Though in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing, yet he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him; and faith clutcheth that promise, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" and she looks upon the future with the same eye of

faith with which she looks back upon the pardoned past, and rests herself upon the faithfulness and power of God to save. At times these old sins will rush in upon the believer's mind with a terrific force. Gathering dreadful strength from *the justice of God*, our eyes are tormented with the vision of an angry God, with his sword drawn, ready to smite us for our offences. Glorious is that faith which can fling itself into the arms of God, even when the sword is in his hand, and will not believe that God can strike the sinner who relies upon the blood of Jesus. Mighty is that faith which, looking at justice, stern and severe, yet trembles not, but cries, "Thou art merciful and *just* to forgive me my sins, for I have confessed them. Christ hath full atonement made, and thou wilt not twice demand the debt. He paid it once, and thou canst not lay anything to my charge." Triumphant is that faith which marches right up to heaven, and stands before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and yet can cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God hath justified: who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that hath risen again;" and this even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past hath lashed the soul to tempest. When we really know the blessed merit of Jesus' blood; when we fully understand the superlative mercy of God; when we come to know the overflowing love of the Father towards his beloved children—we shall not look upon sin as being less sin than before, but we shall no longer fear its penal consequences, being confi dently assured in our soul that none of these sins can destroy us; that not the whole of them together can for a moment shake our standing in him, nor by any means put us in any danger of eternal wrath, since we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and washed in his blood. Brethren, our sins, when pardoned, should increase our delight in God, since they afford us evidences of his exceedingly abundant grace and love. Amalie Sieveking, a notable Christian heroine, one of the most zealous workers of modern times, writes thus: "The sense of my own powerlessness but brings me nearer to him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. I give myself up to his guidance, in cheerful trust that he will finish the work which he has begun, and help the poor stumbling child again and again to rise, ay, should it stumble a hundred times a day;"—And this is the point I want you to notice,—"Sometimes I feel as though I must lay bare to others the whole accumulated amount of my guilt, that they may with me admire the riches of divine longsuffering." This is how faith learneth to deal with sin—to make it a foil to show the brightness of mercy—the setting in which the diamond of divine love flashes with superlative lustre. The faithful heart always remembers its sin with shame; but still it remembers God's pardoning love with gratitude, and the sorrow helps to increase the thankfulness. The lower we sink by reason of the fall, the higher our love to God rises when we reflect how his strong hand hath taken us up "out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings." Oh! I would this morning that some of you who are full of sin would believe that

Christ can save you. "All things are possible to him that believeth." What if thou art the blackest sinner out of hell, and think the devil himself white compared with yourself, yet if thou canst trust Christ this morning, "all things are possible to him that believeth." Whiter than the newly fallen snow shalt thou be in an instant, if thou canst now rest thy soul upon Jesus, who is able to save.

2. Let us now observe faith in the midst of *those constant attacks of which the heir of heaven is the subject.* Here faith again does all things. My brethren, no sooner is a Christian born, than there is a great a stir about him, even as concerning Christ himself, for Herod seeks the young child that he may destroy him. We all know how constantly *the world* attacks us, more especially if we will be separate from it, and will keep our garments white, and will not indulge in the common pleasures, nor be guided by the ordinary maxims of society. Then the world howls at us like a pack of wolves. What then? Why, faith finds here but an easy task, for it learns to glory in tribulations, delightfully remembering the beatitude of Jesus on the mount—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." This is an everyday conquest with the Christian, to laugh at Satan's threats. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." The world attacks us also with its smiles, and unhappy is the man who has no faith, for soon the blandishments of the world will overcome him; but he that is full of faith, when the world offers him silver, replies, "Nay, I am rich in gold," and if the world would give him treasure, he would say, "I have a better portion than thou canst offer me. Wilt thou tempt a king with farthings, or a prince with beggar's broken victuals? I am heir of all things in Christ; this world is mine, and heaven is mine too." So *he* laugheth to scorn all the smiles of the wicked, just as he did in the case of their frowns.

Alas, brethren, we are equally attacked by *the flesh.* The lusts within are not dead; they are powerful still, and we know it to our cost. But here, too, faith overcometh; for while faith recognises the power of the flesh and the lusts thereof, it so layeth hold upon Christ, that it is lifted up into heavenly places, and is able to tread its corruptions under foot. Faith saith to the believer, "Be thou assured that notwithstanding all the plague of thine own heart, and all the loathsomeness of thy nature, yet thou shalt as surely conquer as Christ has conquered, and thou shalt one day be as pure and spotless as even Christ himself before the Father's throne." Up and at thy lusts, believer! There is no sin which will not yield to faith. There is no necessity that we should always be sinning as we have been: we *can* overcome our lusts. Ye *can* drive out these Canaanites: though they dwell in cities walled to heaven, and have chariots of iron, ye shall put your feet upon their necks yet, and utterly destroy them. By little and by little ye may assuredly drive them out, but only by faith; not by works, not by trust in your own moral

resolutions, but by trust in the sprinkled blood of Jesus, can ye overcome all temptation, and subdue your sin.

"With my sling and stone I go,
To fight the Philistine,
God hath said it shall be so,
And *I shall* conquer sin;
On his promise I rely,
Trust in an Almighty Lord,
Sure to win the victory,
For he hath spoke the word.
In the strength of God I rise,
I run to meet the foe,
Faith the word of power applies
And lays the giant low.
Faith in Jesus' conquering name,
Slings the sin-destroying stone,
Points the word's unerring aim,
And brings the monster down."

So is it with *the devil.* The devil cometh out against us; but we are more than a match for him when our faith is firm. Upon the shield of our faith we catch his arrows, and by the sword of our faith we smite him to the very heart. There is no temptation that ever can assail a believer, but faith can certainly supply an antidote. If I believe in Jesus I have his promise that I shall overcome, and I shall overcome, because I believe that promise. Even if I should get beneath the devil's foot, and he should lift his sword to smite me, if I could say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for when I fall yet shall I rise again," I should rise, and victory would be mine. Faith overcometh even hell itself and its crowned monarch: for defence it is a panoply, and for attack it is our battle-axe and weapons of war.

As for the *trials of this life,* it is marvellous what feathers these are to faith, for she perceives that troubles come from God. Chrysostom has a gloss upon that passage in Job, where Job says, "The Lord hath taken away." He did not say the Chaldeans did it, nor the Sabeans, though they certainly were the instruments; but the *Lord* hath taken away. The believer seeing God's hand in everything that happeneth to him, feels pleased with all alike. As providence is in his Father's hand, he knows that it is always guided by love, by wisdom, and by grace; and so he thinketh his worst days to be as good as his best; his foul days are fair; his dark days are bright; in full confidence he believeth that all things work together for his good, and he leaveth the working of them entirely with his God. Oh! beloved, it is only want of faith that makes this world such a place of sorrow to God's people; but when we get faith, faith laughs at every tribulation, come from whatsoever source it may.

Thus I have shown you that "all things are possible to him that believeth." Rise up, O hosts of hell, and shoot your arrows! Ye heavens, prepare your tempests! O earth, cast forth thy floods, and thou O flesh come forth with all thy blasphemy and wickedness;—faith walketh unharmed amidst all your fury, more than conqueror through him that hath loved her.

3. We turn your attention to another point; *the obtaining of eminence in grace.* Many professed Christians are always doubting and fearing, and they think that this is the necessary state of believers. By no means, brother! "All things are possible to him that believeth;" and it is possible for you to get into a state in which a doubt or a fear shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across your soul, but never lingering there. When you read in biographies of the high and sweet communions enjoyed by favoured saints you sigh, "Alas, these are not for me." Oh climber! if thou hast but faith, thou shalt stand upon the very pinnacle of the temple yet, for all things are possible to him that believeth. I know you read of what some great men have done for Jesus; what they have enjoyed of him; how much they have been like him; how they have been able to endure for his sake; and you say, "Ah! as for me, I am but a worm; I can never attain to this." There is nothing which one saint was that you may not be. There is no height of grace, no attainment of spirituality, no position of assurance, no post of duty, which is not open to you, if you have but the power to believe. Get ye up, get ye up from your dunghills; lay aside your sackcloth and your ashes. It is not meet that ye should grovel in the dust, oh children of a king. Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of confidence in Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow. Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; for, if thou believest, thou mayest eat the fat of kidneys of wheat; all thy land shall flow with oil, and wine, and milk, and honey, and thy soul shall be as a watered garden, and thy spirit shall be satiated as with marrow and fatness. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

4. And yet a fourth point; the power of faith in reference to *prayer.* Here "all things are possible to him that believeth." In prayer we are sometimes staggered by reason of the *great* things we are about to ask; but faith looketh at the great promise, the great God, and his great love, and thinketh that even a great thing is but a crumb from the Master's table. Then, again, we are often driven back by a sense of unworthiness; but faith looketh at *Christ's* worthiness, and believeth that his worthiness is quite sufficient to put our unworthiness altogether out of court. Then we are apt to think of God's delays; but, then, faith thinks that God cannot deny though he may delay; so she hangeth on till the promise is fulfilled. Though the vision tarry, she waiteth for it till it come, for sure is she that it *will* come. And, oh! it is a splendid thing to see faith wait upon God in prayer, and forswear all carnal means, depending simply and wholly upon the naked promise, and believing that God can do his own work, and perform his own word. Brethren, no man ought to doubt in these modern times but what God *will* answer prayer, and that faith with prayer can do anything. We have often heard of George Müller, of Bristol. There stands, in the form of those magnificent orphan houses, full of orphans, supported without committees, without secretaries, supported only by that man's prayer and faith, there stands, in solid brick and mortar, a testimony to the fact that God hears prayer. But, do you know that Mr. Müller's case is but one among many. Remember the work of Francke at Halle. Look at the Rough House just out of Hamburgh, where Dr. Wichern,

commencing with a few reprobate boys of Hamburgh, only waiting upon God's help and goodness, has now a whole village full of boys and girls, reclaimed and saved, and is sending out on the right hand and on the left brethren to occupy posts of usefulness in every land. Remember the brother Gossner, of Berlin, and how mightily God has helped him to send out not less than two hundred missionaries, throughout the length and breadth of the earth preaching Christ, while he has for their support nothing but the bare promise of God, and the faith which has learned to reach the hand of God, and take from it all it needs. And need I remind you of a story we told you last Friday night—the story of pastor Harms, in Hermaunsburg, where, by the power of that man's faith in preaching the Word, he has seen the barren wilderness made to blossom like the rose, till his Church has become a very model of what a Church of God ought to be, a living working body, from which he sends out missionaries to the coast of Africa, having nothing for their supply but the offerings of the people, drawn from them by the exercise of prayer and faith. I was reading a memorable passage in his life, where he says, he was wanting to send his missionaries out to the Gallas tribe in Africa, but could not find any means; and so he says, "Then I knocked diligently on the dear God in prayer; and since the praying man dare not sit with his hands in his lap, I sought among the shipping agents, but came to no speed; and I turned to Bishop Gobat in Jerusalem, but had no answer; and then I wrote to the missionary Krapf in Mombaz, but the letter was lost. Then one of the sailors who remained said, 'Why not build a ship, and you can send out as many and as often as you will.' The proposal was good; but, the money! That was a time of great conflict, and I wrestled with God. For no one encouraged me, but the reverse; and even the truest friends and brethren hinted that I was not quite in my senses. When Duke George of Saxony lay on his death-bed, and was yet in doubt to whom he should flee with his soul, whether to the Lord Christ and his dear merits, or to the pope and his good works, there spoke a trusty courtier to him: 'Your Grace, *Straightforward makes the best runner.*' That word has lain fast in my soul. I had knocked at men's doors and found them shut; and yet the plan was manifestly good and for the glory of God. What was to be done? *Straightforward makes the best runner.* I prayed fervently to the Lord, laid the matter in his hand, and, as I rose up at midnight from my knees, I said, with a voice that almost startled me in the quiet room: *Forward now, in God's name!* From that moment there never came a thought of doubt into my mind." Friends! the Churches of Christ have no need of the modern machinery which has supplanted the simplicity of faith. I verily believe, if the Lord swept the committees, secretaries, and missionary societies out of the universe, we should be better without them if our Churches would but trust God, send out their own men, raise the money to support them, and believe that God would bless them. I hope the Church will soon say, like David in Saul's clanking armour, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tried them," and with only her sling and her stone, confident in her God, I trust she will confront her foe. We can do all things, if we can but trust Christ. "All things are possible to him

make a man get through a decent sermon on a Sunday? Is this all? Is this God's work? I see God's work in nature, and there are towering Alps, and roaring seas, and cataracts lashed to fury; but I look on God's work in the Church—little, little, little everywhere. Littleness is stamped upon the brow of to-day; we do not do and dare; and I am inclined to think that until we see some great and daring deed attempted, and some great and marvellous thing done for Christ, we shall not see the glory of the Lord revealed, so that all flesh shall see it together. What are we doing here, all of us cooped up in this little island, all of us living in England? "*The world* lieth in the wicked one." How is it our hearts beat not for the heathen? We must stay at home; we have calls. But is not the call of God louder still, if we had but faith? But we are so carnal—we live so much on "the things that are seen," that we cannot do a rash, brave, imprudent act for the Master. God help us to do it! Then shall the Church arise and put on her beautiful garments; and woe to thee, Askelon, when Israel's God is in the camp! Woe to thee, Gaza, for thy gates shall be carried on our shoulders, when once we believe we are strong enough to bear them to the top of the hill, posts and bars and all! "All things are possible," in the service of God, "to him that believeth."

Finally, when we shall come to die, sickness shall cause us no anxiety; the solemn mysteries of the last article shall give us no alarm; the grave shall be no place of gloom; judgment shall know no terrors; eternity shall have no horrors; for to him that believeth, all things are possible, and death and death's shade give way before faith. Heaven yields to faith; hell trembles at it; earth is powerless before it, and lies in the hand of the faithful man, like clay upon the potter's wheel, to be moulded as he wills.

II. I come to my last point, and may God bless it. WHERE LIES, THEN, THE SECRET STRENGTH OF FAITH? It lies in the food it feeds on; for faith studies *what the promise is*—an emanation of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God; and faith says, "My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain that this promise will be fulfilled." Then faith thinketh, "*Who gave* this promise?" It considereth not so much its greatness, as "Who is the author of it?" She remembers that it is God that cannot lie—God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore she concludeth that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward she goes in this firm conviction. Then she remembereth, also, *why* the promise was given—namely, for God's glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God's glory is safe, that he will never stain his own escutcheon, nor mar the lustre of his own crown; and therefore she concludeth that the promise must and will stand. Then faith also considereth the amazing *work of Christ* as being a clear proof of the Father's intention to fulfil his word. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Then faith looks back upon *the past*, for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her; nay, that he never did once fail any of his children. She recollecteth times of great peril, when deliverance came—hours of

awful need, when as her day her strength was; and she says, "No; I never will be led to think that he can now forswear himself, and change his character, and leave his servant. Faith, moreover, feeleth that she cannot believe a hard thing of her dear God. Is it wrong to use that expression? I must use it, for he *is* dear to me! I think this is one of the things I have repented of above all other sins I have committed—the sin of ever doubting him who loves me so well that he had sooner die than I should perish, and did die that I might live. What! that God so dear to my soul—do I doubt him? I would not spread a report that my father was a liar, or that my mother would forswear herself. No, blessed parents, ye would not be unkind to me; and, my blessed God, my faith knoweth that thou *canst* not be unkind; thy love will *make* thee faithful even if thy faithfulness were not enough of itself. If our God *can* leave us, then indeed am I mistaken in his character. If I can *dare* something for God, and he can leave me, then have I misread Scripture. I do not believe, young warrior, if God shall prompt you to dash into the thick of the battle, that he will leave you, as Joab did Uriah, to fall by the arrows of the enemy. Only dare it, and God will be greater than your daring. But we refuse to be honourable. A little hardship, a little difficulty, a little danger, and we shrink back to our ignoble sloth. Oh that we would rise to the glory of believing!

Dearly beloved, I have tried thus to stir up your souls; but I am very conscious that we cannot have this faith in Christ, except as we have more of his Holy Spirit. But then we have the promise—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Ask for more faith. This Church is enough of itself for the conversion of the whole world, if God will give us faith enough. If the little band at Jerusalem were all that was wanted, a band of more than two thousand faithful men and women might be enough, if we had faith. And look at all the Churches around: would their success be as little as it is, if they had more faith? All things are possible, and yet we do nothing! Everything within our reach, and yet we are poor! Heaven itself on our side, and yet we are defeated! Shameful unbelief! be thou put to death for ever! Glorious faith! live thou in our souls! I hope that both sinner and saint will believe in the mercy, and goodness, and truth of God, as revealed in Christ, and that we will take this home with us for to-day's meal—"All things are possible to him that believeth."

"Faith treads on the world and on hell;
It vanquishes death and despair;
And, O! let us wonder to tell,
It overcomes heaven by prayer,—

Bids sins of a crimson-like dye
Be spotless as snow and as white;
And raises the sinner on high
To dwell with the angels of light."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SELF-DELUSION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—Luke xiii. 24.

EVERY wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven, will do the same by himself; he will always cry, "Search me, O God, and try me;" and he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things be right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher; and of old his servants knew him as "the Lord which searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men." We who are called to be mouth for God unto the people, feel ourselves impelled to stir you up in his name to make diligent search, for we would not have you come short of the promised rest. We should be unfaithful to your souls if we did not warn you against deception, and excite you to solemn trial of your state. That which every wise man does, that which God himself does with you, I may well exhort you to do with yourselves this morning. O may God help you to deal very faithfully with your own hearts. Let the oldest saint here look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for grey heads may cover black hearts; and let not the young believer, in the first flush of his joyous faith, despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy.

I shall not this morning aim to introduce doubts and fears into your minds; nay, verily, but I shall hope the rather that the rough wind of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security which we would kill; not confidence, but fleshly confidence which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace which we would destroy. I am sure I am right in taking such a text as this, and in desiring to force it home upon your attention; for Christ, speaking to his own disciples, says, "I say unto YOU." Notice with great care how he repeats the personal pronoun, *you*, *ye*, *yourselves*, some twelve times in a few verses; as if this were a matter specially belonging to professors; a subject which ought to come under our immediate notice, not as having reference to aliens and foreigners from the commonwealth of Israel, but to us, the professed followers of Jesus.

Let us bow our strength to our solemn work at once. O thou great Master of assemblies, make our words as goads to the conscience, and fasten them as nails in the memory!

I. Our first remark is this—MANY PROFESSORS ARE DECEIVED. So the text teaches us. It does not say "a few may be misled," but "*many* shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." That many professors are deceived is clear enough from the language of Christ himself, both here and in other places. For instance, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom; and five of them were wise, and *five were foolish.*" We hope that in our Churches we have not such a division as this, for it were fearful to contemplate only one half as sincere, and the other half graceless, having the lamp of profession, without the secret vessel of spiritual life! Yet, so alarming a proportion as five out of ten should make us search ourselves very carefully, lest we be found among the virgins, and among the virgins having lamps, ay, and among those whose lamps are burning, and yet should be cast away as having no oil in our vessels with our lamps. Remember how the Master in another parable putteth the multitude of the lost clearly before us: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Now, by these goats are meant those who are in the flock, but are not sheep. A separation is needed, for they once were mingled; yes, so mingled that they had a sort of hope, and were able impudently to plead—"Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Yet I do not discover in the parable that there were more sheep than goats. I find, at any rate, that the goats made up a very considerable multitude; and though they expected to receive the benediction with the blessed, he said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Recal to your recollection, also, another picture of our Saviour, where the sower went forth to sow his seed. Here there were three places where the seed fell in vain, and only one where it brought forth fruit; and, out of the three where it fell in vain, there were two that must be numbered with professors. In the one case it fell where the thorns sprang up and choked it: there was religion, but worldliness killed it. In the next, it fell where there was not much depth of earth; and the Master tells us that there are some who hear the Word, and anon with joy receive it; but when persecution comes by-and-bye, they are offended, for there was never a deep work in their inner spirit. Tremble, my hearers, so many of you as have received the Word with joy and gladness, lest *you* should be found to have had no depth of earth, and so, by-and-bye, the good thing which has blossomed and budded in you should perish before the burning sun of persecution.

Nor are these parables so few; I might occupy much of your time by recalling them; but let me remind you that Christ himself is compared

by Malachi to a refiner. "He shall purify the sons of Levi; he shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Now, of the mass that is put into the refining furnace, how little comes out pure gold or silver! All those who have to deal with metals will tell you that the ore and the slag make up by far the greater part, and that if they get but a small per centage, they are well rewarded for all their toil and trouble. The Master says he will bring a third part through the fire, and happy should it be for us, if we be not found among the two-thirds that shall be put away like dross. You will remember, too, that Christ compares himself to a husbandman winnowing his corn. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Ask the husbandman whether the chaff does not make a very considerable part of the unwinnowed mass, and whether it is not most intimately connected with the wheat. A large heap, it lies upon the floor: wait till the fan has been used, and diligently applied, and you shall see the heap diminished by handfuls, for the chaff has fled, and now only the good grain is left. All these metaphors, and many more, go to warn us that there are many professors who are deceived—many that are in Israel, who are not of Israel—many that are mingled with us, who are like the mixed multitude which came up out of Egypt with Moses, who shall never enter into the promised land, but shall leave their carcases to perish in the wilderness.

But, dear friends, we are not left to inferences, for Holy Scripture gives us facts. Let me recal them to your recollection. Among the Apostles themselves, chosen by Christ, having Christ for their teacher and exemplar, there was a Judas. "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Were it very reasonable to suppose that our modern Churches have a smaller proportion than this of devilish deceivers? If even among Apostles, one in twelve is a liar, deceiving and being deceived, O Lord, how should thy people search and try themselves, lest they be found wanting at the last! Recollect, too, that in the early Church, within a few days after the Spirit of God had been poured out, when that Church was in the overflowing joy of her espousals, there were found two at least who were false to their profession. Ananias and Sapphira "lied unto the Holy Ghost," and fell dead before the rebuke of Peter. If, with the Spirit just poured out, there were spots in their solemn feasts; if in the first glory of the Church's sky there were wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness and darkness for ever; how much more in these days of the Church's decrepitude, when we have need enough to cry, "Descend, O sacred fire, descend again; for without thee thy Church shall die." The Book of the Acts of the Apostles also informs us of an instance of a wonderful success in the city of Samaria; and yet even here, among the early converts of this revival, there was found an arch-impostor. Philip the evangelist preaches in Samaria, and it is written, "Then Simon Magus believed also." But you know how false he was; for Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the Holy Ghost can be purchased with money." "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Well, if in one of the earliest

of revivals, when converts were numerous, when miracles abounded, when the whole city was full of joy, we find still a Simon Magus, what must we expect now? And, brethren, I scarcely need to remind you, that with Paul as an overlooker of the Church the cases of deception and apostacy were not few. "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." "Demas hath forsaken me." "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." Hymenœas and Alexander having made shipwreck of faith, the Apostle says, "Whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." Philetus is mentioned, "Whose word will eat as doth a canker." There were, even with Paul as an overlooker—I say, there were even in such Churches as the Galatians,—men who were accursed because they preached another gospel; and in the Church of Corinth there were found ill-livers who had to be cast out of the assembly. Moreover, brethren, you will please to recollect, that the Lord Jesus Christ himself gives no flattering character of the seven Churches in Asia, though they were like seven golden candlesticks. Of the best of them he might say, "I have somewhat against thee." Of Sardis it is said, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments;" and of Laodicea, you will recollect it was "neither cold nor hot, so that Christ did spue it out of his mouth." Put these things together, and you will see they make up a mass of hypocrisy and deception, in the most favourable age of the Church's history; and we therefore think ourselves far from an uncharitable judgment when we expect to find in the Church of to-day many that are deceived.

But, friends, I need not argue thus; for we *know* that there are such, and know it to our cost. Every now and then a cedar falls in our midst. "Howl fir trees," when the cedars fall. We have seen—who has not that has had any experience in the religious world?—we have seen our leaders turn their backs in the day of battle; and our teachers fail to sustain their own character. Ah! and we have the painful conviction that there are others who are not discovered yet, whose sins do not go beforehand unto judgment, but follow after; who are nevertheless tainted at the core. There are the many covetous professors who are as grasping and as grinding as if they never professed to be Christians; and you know that "covetousness is idolatry." There are the many time-serving Christians, who hold with the world and with Christ too; and ye know that we cannot serve two masters. There are the many secret sinners among Christians, who have their petty vices which come not under human observation, and who, because they are thought to be good, write themselves down among the godly; now we know there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and woe to them when their secret sins shall be published on the house-tops.

Then we have the legal professors, who trust to their own works, and shall find that the curse of Sinai shall wither them. And what shall I more say? Have we not many who are not so inconsistent that we could put our finger upon any open sin sufficient to deserve excommunication, but who are guilty of enormous spiritual wickedness? They are dead; they bring forth no fruit; their hearts are hard as a millstone with regard to the conversion of sinners; they have not

the *faith* of God's elect; they do not live by faith; they have not the *spirit* of Christ, and therefore they are none of his. God knoweth we have sought to use all care and diligence in this Church, both to keep out unworthy persons and to cast out unhallowed livers; but, despite all that, we cannot but be conscious, and we tell it you faithfully, that the enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. The gold is mixed with the dross and the wine with water: for evil men thrust themselves into the heritage of the Lord. When our muster-roll shall be revised at last, how many out of our more than two thousand members will be found to be base-born pretenders unto godliness! O my brethren, I conjure you, by the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you hypocrites, but shed that a sincere people might show forth His praise; I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you, "Mene, Mene Tekel, thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

II. We shall now turn to a second point. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE FALSE PROFESSORS.

There is an imitation of the externals of godliness, which it is not easy to detect. Art can carve a statue so that it almost breathes; and some of us in looking at very skilful paintings have mistaken them for realities. In a notable picture in the Exhibition, you will have noticed an imitation of sunlight shining under a door, so well effected, that many go up to it to ascertain if it be not really a gleam from the sun. We know that men can counterfeit coins and notes so well, that only the most experienced can detect them; and in all commercial transactions men are so well aware of the subtlety of their fellows, that they look well lest they be deceived. The vital mysteries of godliness are mysterious: the inner life cannot be perceived by the carnal eye, and the outer life of the godly seemeth to most men to be but morality carried out with care; and hence it becomes but a very simple task for a man to make himself look just like a Christian, so as to deceive the very elect. To learn by heart that which others say *from* the heart—to get the outline of a believer's experience, and then to adapt it skilfully to one's self as *our* experience—this is a thing so simple, that instead of wondering that there are hypocrites, I often marvel that there are not ten times more. And then, again, the graces—the real graces within—are very easy to counterfeit. There is a repentance that needeth to be repented of—and yet it approaches near as possible to true repentance. Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance; for Balaam said, "If Barak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord." Does true repentance make men humble themselves? So does false repentance; for Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet he perished. There is a line of distinction so fine, that an eagle's eye hath not seen it, and only God himself, and the soul which is enlightened with his Spirit, can tell whether this repentance be genuine or no. And as for faith, how easy it is to counterfeit this! Even in Christ's day, there was a faith which wrought miracles but did not save the soul; and Paul tells us that if we had a faith which could remove mountains, yet if we had not charity, it would profit us nothing. I know it, that a man may

say that he is saved by faith without works; and his faith may give him comfort, his faith help him in trials, it may make him forsake some sins, and yet it may not be the faith which looks alone to Christ, and so saves the soul. To imitate these things, to so cunning and well-practised a counterfeiter as Satan, is no great difficulty.

Dear friends, let us remember too that there are so many things which *help* a man to deceive himself. He himself is naturally disposed to be very partial. "Let well alone," is a proverb which most men have learned. Very few men *care* to look at the worst of their own state; they would rather say, "Peace, peace," than think too harshly of themselves. What man ever gave *himself* a bad character? or if he did, what man could not abundantly excuse himself for having such a character? Then there is the devil, who never wants us to be too careful, for heedlessness is one of the nets in which he takes his prey. He will whisper in the ear, "It is all well," and so beguileth the simple soul to its sure ruin. Beside that, there are the inconsistencies of true Christians. Self and Satan will always use these. "Why, you are as good as old So-and-so;" or, "David sinned, therefore you may be a saint and sin; Lot fell, therefore you may fall and be a saint." And so, what with the flesh, what with the sins of true Christians, and what with the devil together, it is so easy for a man to fall asleep in carnal security, dreaming about heaven, and never having his dream broke till he lifts up his eyes in hell.

Beloved, I must add to this point, that I marvel not that so many are deceived, when I see the careless way in which you deal with religion. When men have to do with their estates, they are very careful; they fee a lawyer to go back over the title-deeds perhaps for two or three hundred years. In trade they will hurry hither and thither to attend to their commercial engagements; they would not launch into speculations, nor would they run great risks; but the soul, the poor soul, how men play with it as a toy, and despise it as if it were worthless earth. Two or three minutes in the morning when they first roll out of bed, two or three odd minutes in the evening, when they are nearly asleep—the fag-ends of the day given to their souls, and all the best part given to the body! And then, the Sabbath! How carelessly spent by most people! With what indifference do you lend your ears too often to the preaching of the Word! It is an old song; ye have heard it so many times; heaven has become a trifle to you, hell is almost a jest, eternity a notion, and death but a bugbear. Alas! alas! it is a marvel that there are not more deceived. The wonder is that any find the gate—that any discover eternal life, when we are so, so mad, so foolish, so insane, as to trifle where we ought to be awfully in earnest, and to play and toy, where the whole heart is all too little to be given to a work of such dread, such everlasting importance. God help us, since it is so easy to be deceived, to search, and watch, and look, and test, and try, that we be not found castaways at the last!

III. But now for a third point, and that is a very solemn one, namely, that THIS DELUSION MAY CONTINUE THROUGHOUT LIFE, even to the very last moment; and probably the first minutes of our life in the next world may be tinctured with the same delusion. Strange to

think so, and yet some Scriptures seem to hint as much. Let me tell you one or two parables which Christ has used, which prove that this delusion may last long. There are the tares and the wheat: "Let both grow together until the harvest." It appears that the time of division does not arrive until the reapers, who are the angels, gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn. So, you see, you may stand in a professing state through your whole threescore years and ten, and you may be carried to your grave, followed by a train of devout men, who make great lamentation over you; and yet, though laid in the grave like a sheep, the worm may devour you, and you may wake in the morning to shame and everlasting contempt. The separation may never occur, so far as the Church on earth is concerned; it may go on till the angelic revisers shall correct the list, and cut you off who are not of God. Another parable—the Draw Net repeats the same warning, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that is cast into the sea, and gathers of every kind." When does the division come? Not till they have drawn the net to land. *Then* they put the good into vessels, and throw the bad away. So not till the land comes—that is, till eternity has begun shall be the great division; and some of you may remain in the net of the Church till it is pulled ashore at the day of judgment, and we may some of us be expecting to find you in the vessels and yet you will be thrown away, or we may expect ourselves to be there, and yet ourselves may be thrown away.

I refer you again to another parable, where the same truth is taught, but, perhaps, even more forcibly. A great king made a supper, and, it is said, "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Here was a man who remained in the kingdom, that is in the visible Church-state, till the king came in to see the guests, that is until Christ comes to judge the quick and dead. Then was he cast out, but not till then. Many postpone all trial of themselves as to their possession of the righteousness of Christ to the last moment; nay, some manage to defer it, with all the miserable discoveries which it brings, until the grave is past and the great assize is held, but further the cheat cannot be played—further the examination cannot be deferred. When Jesus comes, it will be impossible for any to remain ignorant of their true state, for that day will pour a flood of light into the darkest corners of the darkest hearts, and reveal the most secret of all secret things. Solemn reflection! solemn reflection for every man and woman here who has made a profession of godliness! You may be sitting at the table, and you may continue to sit there, without any of your fellow-guests taking any exception to you; but when the king comes in, whose eyes can read the secrets of all hearts, he will say, "How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" Then will your nakedness and defilement startle you from your fancied security; speechless confusion shall cover you; your heart shall find no excuse, the sentence shall bear justice on its forefront. "Bind him hand and foot." Let resistance and escape be made impossible. "Cast him into outer darkness," for he shunned the light; "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," fit doom for one who would not weep nor search his soul,

Sundry other parables utter the same warning note, but I shall quote only one more, and that is, the unprofitable servant. He was a servant, and remained so, and had the impudence to present himself among the other servants to receive the reward; nay, and when he had no reward, he had the impertinence to argue with his master, and to claim that he had done his best with his Lord's money. You may have a talent—and, oh! how many of you have—which you are burying in the earth; and you may never be upbraided by your fellow-servants; yes, and when *He* comes, you may with brazen face go up to ask for your reward, but he shall say, "Take the unprofitable servant!" and you know what the doom of such must be.

Hence, then, from Christ's own language, we have the most satisfactory and solemn cause to believe that the delusion of many may continue even to the last. The blindness of the self-deceiver may continue until he finds himself in the tenfold night of eternal perdition. But we need not go to Scripture for a proof of this, for we *know* that it is so ourselves. We have not an exact way of testing men's states, it were foolish to pretend to infallibility, but there are times when one can form a very accurate guess, the door of man's heart now and then stands on the jar. Death-beds tell tales. It is not every man who has the hardihood to dance with death and wear a mask upon the brink of the grave. Ah! how many there are who go through the first and the second gate, but they cannot open the iron gate that leadeth into the city. I have seen some that could brave it out when in life, who have made a sorry figure in the article of death. It is a gloomy thing to hear a high professor after all his boastings compelled to condemn himself out of his own mouth—"I have been a hypocrite; I have sat at the Lord's table, and I have drunk the cup of devils, too; I was respected, when I was not respectable; I was accepted among saints, when I was a foul villain the whole while." Some men have had to hang in chains before their execution. Some wretches lift up their eyes before they are actually in torment. But there have been others, more stolid still, who have gone right through the iron gate, with perfect quietness and calmness; and when we have heard their friends say, "Oh, he died such an easy death!" we have remembered that passage concerning the wicked, "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." This is the mark of the wicked, not of the righteous. O that sullen quietude, that dead calm, in which some men float into another world! How wretched that awful peace which heralds the overwhelming tempest and hurricane! Have I not watched the spirits of unregenerate professors and seen the ghastly horror of the dread suspense which they laboured to conceal. Not that their lives were inconsistent, but they had no spiritual life—no care for souls, no love for Christ, no private prayer, no secret fellowship, and now at last they have no triumph and no comfort of the Spirit, and are driven to the miserable shift of aping both. When their time has come to die, they have talked as glibly as any, and they have closed their eyes as peacefully as any, but, like Dives, "In hell they have lift up their eyes, being in torment," and found their delusion dissipated, when, alas! it was too late. I warn you, dear

hearers, that this delusion may continue for even fifty, sixty, or seventy years, and the man may say, "It is all well with my soul," and have neither doubt nor fear the whole time, and yet he may turn out rotten at the last. The glorious Dreamer has sketched the end of the false professor; I quote his words, that you may see the scene before your eyes. "Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance come up to the river side; but he soon got over, and that without that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place, one Vainhope, a ferryman, that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any man meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him; but he was asked by the men that looked over the top of the gate, Whence come you? and what would you have? He answered, I have eaten and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the city, to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. *Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.*"

IV. The next point is this—that this delusion, even to the last, MAY SEEM TO HAVE THE MOST EXCELLENT ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT IT. I shall prove this from Scripture. A man may be a deceiver, and he may accomplish his task all the more readily because he can say, "I have made and I have maintained a very respectable profession in the Church. I do not know that I have ever tarnished my character; I believe I am looked upon by most people as a pattern and example." Yes, this may be all correct, and yet you may be shut out at the last. Remember that the five foolish virgins *were* virgins. They had not forfeited the chastity of their character, but were of such good repute as to have virtuous companions, and to have allowance to meet the honoured bridegroom. They had lamps. Mark that. I do not find that they threw them away. Those lamps were burning too, for a long time; and they had *some* oil, mark, or else the lamps could not have burned so long; but they had not the oil in the vessel, though they had the oil in the lamp. Here was the fatal blunder. So the man may say, "Well, I am all right; the lamp burns; does it not burn as well as yours? *You* say you have other oil in your vessel; that does not matter; I have as much oil *in my lamp* as you; mine shines as brightly; I am careful with it; and if *I* sleep, you sleep too; so that I have as decent a profession as you have." And yet, for all this, *God* may at the last rend you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver

you. How often is the candle of the wicked put out, and his beauty utterly consumed.

Again, some may bring a very careful outward observance of religion as an excellent argument, and think the conclusion to be drawn therefrom to be very satisfactory. "Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast preached in our streets." You have been baptized; you are always at the Lord's table; your pew always sees you in it whenever the doors are opened. All this is very proper and right; but it may all help to make you more easily deceived. You may conclude that you must be right because of this; and yet, the *Master* may say, "I never knew you." If means of grace could raise men to heaven, Capernaum would not have been cast down to hell. If attendance at the temple could save the soul, then Caiaphas would be in glory. If hearing the Word would be enough, then Herod would be in heaven. O brethren, more than this you must have, or you will miss of everlasting life. Further, you may even go the length of manifesting much religious activity, and you may conclude from this that it must be all right with you—as those did who said, "In thy name we have done many wonderful works." We may have been preachers, and have converted our hundreds and attracted our thousands; we may have been Sunday school teachers, and led our little ones to Christ; we may have been missionaries, whose names have been applauded at the public meeting; but, for all that, we may be found castaways at the last; for it is not the doing of mighty works, but vital union with Christ by real faith, which shall be the point that shall decide the question. O friends, your preachings, prayings, almsgivings, tract distributings, unless grace be in you, help you in your delusion, and make it the more difficult to arouse you from it. The more diligent in service the self-deceiver becomes, the more strong is the net in which his foot is taken. Every duty performed, may be but another fetter to bind our souls if we be graceless professors. O that I could awake you, ye desperately bewitched and stupified deceivers!

Dear friends, even the righteousness of God may furnish us with a plea if we choose our own delusions, and from every holy thing we may fetch apologies. We may say, "Religion is very hard; God is very strict and severe; nobody can carry it out as he should; therefore it will be well with me." Just as *he* said, "Lord, I knew that thou wast an austere man, gathering where thou hadst not strawed, and reaping where thou hadst not sown;" and so, knowing that we are not what we should be, we may keep up our delusion by the excuse that there are very few who are, and that God is a hard master. And so we may go on, keeping our eyes fast shut, till the flames of hell shall wake us up, to sleep and dream no more. I know some who will even make it an excuse that they did not know what religion required of them, and they will plead ignorance. "It is true," they will say, "I have not done as I should, but I did not know about it." Just as they did on the left hand. "When saw we thee an hungred and fed thee not, or thirsty and gave thee no drink?" I did not know," says the man, "that Christ was on earth; I knew there was a parcel of poor people about that many despised and called fanatics; I did not suppose that feeding them would have been feeding Christ;

I did not know Christ." "No," says Christ, "and I do not know you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I *never* knew you." Ah! beloved, if you *will* be deceived, it is the easiest task in the world to accomplish your purpose. Any fool can delude himself; it needs no wise and persevering and patient man to invent a method by which to drag his soul into a damnable delusion. This can be done by sitting still. If you would be saved, ye must "*strive* to enter in at the straight gate;" but if you would be damned, there is no striving wanted; it is only a little matter of neglect, and the whole is done. "How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation?"

V. And now to the last point, this delusion may last through life, and be sustained by many specious arguments, but IT MUST ALL BE DISPELLED.

Ah! if this pretty dreaming could last for ever—if the man could have hope for ever—then I need not be earnest with you this morning; but since it must be dispelled, hear me! hear me! men and brethren, while briefly I utter a few solemn warnings.

Remember, professor, thou wilt then be all alone. There will be no minister to comfort thee—no deacons and Church-members to say you have maintained a good profession. You will have then to look at your own acts, your own faith, and your own life, in the solemn privacy of eternity; and *then* you will give the right verdict, if you do not now. Then, too, your conscience will be awake. You would give a thousand worlds if you could make it sleep then, for conscience is "the worm" of hell, and it "dieth not;" it is the fire that never *can* be quenched. Then you will not be able to satisfy conscience with pretences nor with promises, but it will gnaw, and bite, and devour, and vex you; the fury of its fire will consume once for all your proud conceits, and comfortable fancies. Then, too, your mind shall be more sensitive than it is now. Now you think little of hell or heaven, time or eternity; but then those words will stick like daggers in you. You will feel then that the soul *was* of importance—nay, that it was all-important. You will then be made to feel those themes which now only enter your ears and are forgotten. There will be no cups in which to drown your thoughts, no theatres in which to dissipate your melancholy, no gay company in which to laugh or talk away the impressions of the Sabbath. There will be no chance then of laughing at the minister, or pacifying your conscience about these things; but your sensitive soul, wounded in every point, shall be made to cry aloud, and never shall its cries cease, for then you shall be lost, lost, lost for ever. Then your knowledge shall increase, and you shall know what you know not now, but all you know shall only make your folly appear the more folly, because when there was hope you despised it, and when Christ was preached to you, you were contented with the counterfeit and despised the reality. But hear me: hear me once again. Man! then *God* shall deal with you. Now it is only my poor voice; it is only my feeble utterance that goes to your heart to-day, and you will forget it all; or perhaps you do not feel it now. But when God deals with you, it will be another thing. Oh! if I were a Baxter, I would preach my sermon out in tears, and weep over you, proud and high pro-

fessors, that will not search and examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. But if *I* cannot get at you, God will. Those eyes of fire shall shed a light into the darkest corners of your soul. That finger shall find out the leprous spots which now you have so well concealed; *His* hand shall rip open your breast, to look at your heart, and expose it to the assembled universe. As sure as God shall deal with you, so would I have you surely deal with God. Make *sure* work for eternity. Pull it down, pull it down, if it be built on the sand; consume it, consume it, if it be "wood, hay, stubble," and cry to God this day, that ye may build upon the rock, and use nothing but "gold, silver, and precious stones," that your building may abide the fire.

Sinners! a word to you. If the professor, "if the righteous scarcely be saved," where will *you* appear? Drunkard, surely *you* shall drink the cup of wrath! Swearer! surely you shall have your "damns" and your "anathemas" repayed into your soul abundantly! Thief! thou shalt find that thou hast stolen thine own soul! Harlot! whoremonger! thou shalt find at the last that God abhorreth thee, and he will cast thee from his presence. I say, if even the best living of men need thus to search and try, and if many of *them* shall be shut out, careless sinners, what must then become of you?

And you timid ones—you timid Christians! I have not preached this to alarm you. Let me bid you, however, fly to Jesus again this morning. If there be all this ado, when we come to sift and try, would it not be better for you and me to cling to the cross again, with "Just as I am, I trust thee, Jesu—I trust thee alone." For oh, remember, none can perish that are clinging to the cross.

But, proud professors! the last word must still be for you. You may soar, ay, like Icarus, with wings of wax, but the higher you fly, the more terrible will be your fall. And what will become of you? Think of what has become of others like you, now in hell! What would they give for your Sabbaths over again? What would they give to be here, that they might hear one faithful sermon—that they might repent and escape from the wrath of God? Think, while you are here, how they are cursing themselves to think that they threw away the golden hour, and lost the opportunity! how they gnaw their tongues, while they say, "I came from the table of God to the place of fiends; I came from the pulpit into hell; I descended from Mount Zion to the very depths of Hades; I was brought from Jerusalem to Tophet." And this is to be thy lot, proud professor! except thou repentest. What sayest thou, man? Art thou willing to make thy bed in hell, after having talked of leaning thy head on Jesus' bosom? What! will ye dwell with everlasting burnings, after having sung of everlasting love? What! must you be driven from his presence, when you have boasted of being justified by his righteousness, and washed in his blood? It must be so, professor; it must be so, unless God help thee to make true work, and real work, and sure work of it by the Holy Ghost. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."—Philippians iii. 20.

THERE can be no comparison between a soaring seraph and a crawling worm. Christian men ought so to live that it were idle to speak of a comparison between them and the men of the world. It should not be a comparison but a contrast. No scale of degrees should be possible; the believer should be a direct and manifest contradiction to the unregenerate. The life of a saint should be altogether above, and out of the same list as the life of a sinner. We should compel our critics not to confess that moralists are good, and Christians a little better; but while the world is darkness, we should manifestly be light; and while the world lieth in the Wicked One, we should most evidently be of God, and overcome the temptations of that Wicked One. Wide as the poles asunder, are life and death, light and darkness, health and disease, purity and sin, spiritual and carnal, divine and sensual. If we were what we profess to be, we should be as distinct a people in the midst of this world, as a white race in a community of Ethiopians; there should be no more difficulty in detecting the Christian from the worldling than in discovering a sheep from a goat, or a lamb from a wolf. Alas! the Church is so much adulterated, that we have to abate our glorying, and cannot exalt her character as we would. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" O for the time when "our conversation shall be in heaven," and the ignoble life of the man, whose god is his belly and whose end is destruction, shall be rebuked by our unworldly, unselfish character. There should be as much difference between the worldling and the Christian as between hell and heaven, between destruction and eternal life. As we hope at last that there shall be a great gulf separating us from the doom of the impenitent, there should be here a deep and wide gulf between us and the ungodly. The purity of our character should be such, that men must take knowledge of us that we are of another and superior race. God grant us more and more to be most clearly a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we may shew forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Brethren, to-night I exhort you to holiness, not by the precepts of the law; not by the thunderings from Sinai; not by the perils or punishments which might fall upon you if you are unholy; but by the privileges to which you have been admitted. Gracious souls should only be urged by arguments from grace. Whips are for the backs of fools, and not for heirs of heaven. By the honourable citizenship which has been bestowed upon you, I shall beseech you to let your conversation be in heaven, and I shall urge that most prevailing argument, that the Lord Jesus Christ cometh, and therefore we should be as men that watch for our Lord, diligently doing service unto Him, that when He cometh he may say unto us, "Well done, good and faithful servants." I know that the grace which is in you will freely answer to such a plea.

Our text, I think, might be best translated thus—"Our citizenship is in heaven." The French translation renders it, "As for us, our burgessship is in the heavens." Doddridge paraphrases it, "But we converse as citizens of heaven, considering ourselves as denizens of the New Jerusalem, and only strangers and pilgrims upon earth."

I. The first idea which is suggested by the verse under consideration is this: if our citizenship be in heaven, then WE ARE ALIENS HERE; we are strangers and foreigners, pilgrims and sojourners in the earth, as all our fathers were. In the words of Sacred Writ "Here we have no continuing city," but "we desire a better country, that is an heavenly." Let us illustrate our position. A certain young man is sent out by his father to trade on behalf of the family: he is sent to America, and he is just now living in New York. A very fortunate thing it is for him that his citizenship is in England; that, though he lives in America and trades there, yet he is an alien, and does not belong to that afflicted nation; for he retains his citizenship with us on this side the Atlantic. Yet there is a line of conduct which is due from him to the country which affords him shelter, and he must see to it that he does not fail to render it. Since we are aliens, we must remember to behave ourselves as aliens should, and by no means come short in our duty. We are affected by the position of our temporary country. A person trading in New York or Boston, though a freeman of the city of London, will find himself very much affected by the trade of the Dis-United States: when the merchants of his city suffer, he will find himself suffering with them, the fluctuations of their money-market will affect his undertakings, and the stagnation of commerce will slacken his progress; but if prosperity should happily return, he will find that when the coffers of their merchants are getting full, his will be the better; and the happy development of trade will give buoyancy to his own ventures. He is not of the nation, and yet every trembling of the scale will affect him; he will prosper as that nation prospers, and he will suffer as that nation suffers; that is to say, not as a citizen, but as a trader. And so we in this country find that, though we are strangers and foreigners on earth, yet we share all the inconveniences of the flesh. No exemption is granted to us from the common lot of manhood. We are born to trouble, even as others, and have tribulation like the rest. When famine comes we hunger; and when war rages we are in danger; exposed to the same clime, bearing the same burning heat, or the same freezing cold; we know the whole train of ills, even

as the citizens of earth know them. When God in mercy scatters liberally with both his hands the bounties of his providence, we take our share, though we are aliens, yet we live upon the good of the land, and share the tender mercies of the God of Providence. Hence we have to take some interest in it; and the good man, though he be a foreigner, will not live even a week in this foreign land without *seeking to do good* among the neighbours with whom he dwells. The good Samaritan sought not only the good of the Samaritan nation, but of the Jews. Though there was no sort of kinship among them (for the Samaritans were not, as we have often heard erroneously said, first cousins or relations to the Jews; not a drop of Jewish blood ever ran in the Samaritans' veins; they were strangers brought from Assyria; they had no relation to Abraham whatever) yet the good Samaritan, finding himself travelling between Jericho and Jerusalem, did good to the Jew, since he was in Judea. The Lord charged his people by his servant Jeremiah, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Since we are here, we must seek the good of this world. "To do good and to communicate forget not." "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." We must do our utmost while we are here to bring men to Christ, to win them from their evil ways, to bring them to eternal life, and to make them, with us, citizens of another and a better land; for, to tell the truth, we are here as recruiting sergeants for heaven; here to give men the enlisting money, to bind upon them the blood-red colours of the Saviour's service, to win them to King Jesus, that, by-and-bye, they may share his victories after having fought his battles.

Seeking the good of the country as aliens, we must also remember that it behoves aliens to *keep themselves very quiet*. What business have foreigners to plot against the government, or to intermeddle with the politics of a country in which they have no citizenship? An Englishman in New York had best be without a tongue just now; if he should criticise the courage of the generals, the accuracy of their despatches, or the genius of the President, he might meet with rather rough usage. He will be injudicious indeed, if he cannot leave America to the Americans. So, in this land of ours, where you and I are strangers, we must be orderly sojourners, submitting ourselves constantly to those that are in authority, leading orderly and peaceable lives, and, according to the command of the Holy Ghost through the apostle, "honouring all men, fearing God, honouring the king;" "submitting ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." I cannot say that I delight in political Christians; I fear that party-strife is a serious trial to believers, and I cannot reconcile our heavenly citizenship with the schemes of the hustings and the riot of the polling-booth. You must follow your own judgment here, but for my part, I am a foreigner even in England, and as such I mean to act. We are simply passing through this earth, and should bless it in our transit, but never yoke ourselves to its affairs. An Englishman may happen to be in Spain—he wishes a thousand things

were different from what they are, but he does not trouble himself much about them: says he, "If I were a Spaniard I would see what I could do to alter this government, but, being an Englishman, let the Spaniards see to their own matters. I shall be back to my own country by-and-bye, and the sooner the better." So with Christians here; they are content very much to let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; their politics concern their own country, they do not care much about any other; as *men* they love liberty, and are not willing to lose it even in the lower sense; but, spiritually, their politics are spiritual, and as citizens they look to the interest of that divine republic to which they belong, and they wait for the time when, having patiently borne with the laws of the land of their banishment, they shall come under the more beneficent sway of him who reigns in glory, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men, and serve your day and generation still, but build not your soul's dwelling place here, for all this earth must be destroyed at the coming of the fiery day.

Again, let us remember that as aliens *we have privileges as well as duties.* The princes of evil cannot draft us into their regiments; we cannot be compelled to do Satan's work. The king of this world may make his vassals serve him, but he cannot raise a conscription upon aliens. He may order out his troops to this villany, or to that dastard service, but the child of God claims an immunity from all the commands of Satan; let evil maxims bind the men that own their sway, we are free, and own not the prince of the power of the air. I know that men of this world say we must keep up appearances; we must be respectable; we must do as others do; we must swim with the tide; we must move with the crowd; but not so the upright believer: "No," says he, "Do not expect me to fall in with your ways and customs; I am in Rome, but I shall not do as Rome does. I will let you see that I am an alien, and that I have rights as an alien, even here in this foreign land. I am not to be bound to fight your battles, nor march at the sound of your drums." Brethren, we are soldiers of Christ; we are enlisted in *his* army; and as aliens here, we are not to be constrained into the army of evil. Let lords and lands have what masters they will, let us be free, for Christ is our Master still. The seventy thousand whom God has reserved, will not bow the knee to Baal. Be it known unto thee, O world, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the image which thou hast set up. Servants of God we are, and we will not be in bondage unto men.

As we are free from the conscription of the State, we must remember, also, that we are *not eligible to its honours.* I know you will say that is not a privilege; but it is a great boon if looked at aright. An Englishman in New York is not eligible for the very prickly throne of the President; I suppose he could not well be made a governer of Massachusetts or any other State, and, indeed, he may be well content to renounce the difficulties and the honour too. So also, the Christian man here is not eligible to this world's honours. It is a very ill omen to hear the world clap its hands, and say "Well done" to the Christian man. He may begin to look to his standing, and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong

when the unrighteous give him their approbation. "What, did I do wrong," said Socrates, "that yonder villain praised me just now?" And so may the Christian say, "What, have I done wrong, that So-and-so spoke well of me, for if I had done right he would not; he has not the sense to praise goodness, he could only have applauded that which suited his own taste." Christian men, ye must never covet the world's esteem; the love of this world is not in keeping with the love of God. "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." Treat its smiles as you treat its threats, with quiet contempt. Be willing rather to be sneered at than to be approved, counting the cross of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. O harlot world, it were a sad dishonour to be thy favorite. Tire thy head and paint thy face, thou Jezebel, but thou art no friend of ours, nor will we desire thy hollow love. The men of this world were mad to raise us to their seats of honour, for we are aliens and citizens of another country. When the Pope sent a noted Protestant statesman a present of some silver goblets, he returned them with this answer—"The citizens of Zurich compel their judges to swear twice in the year that they will receive no presents from foreign princes, therefore take them back." More than twice in the year should the Christian resolve that he will not accept the smiles of this world, and will do no homage to its glory. "We fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts." Like the Trojans of old, we may be beguiled with presents even if unconquered in arms. Forswear then the grandeur and honour of this fleeting age. Say in life, what a proud cardinal said in death, "Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye." Pass through Vanity-Fair without trading in its vanities; crying, in answer to their "What will ye buy?"—"We buy the truth." Take up the pilgrim's song and sing it always—

"The things eternal I pursue,
And happiness beyond the view
Of those who basely pant
For things by nature felt and seen;
Their honours, wealth, and pleasures mean,
I neither have nor want.

Nothing on earth I call my own:
A stranger to the world unknown,
I all their goods despise;
I trample on their whole delight,
And seek a country out of sight,—
A country in the skies."

Furthermore, as aliens, *it is not for us to hoard up this world's treasures.* Gentlemen, you who know the exchange of New York, would you hoard up any extensive amount of Mr. Chase's green backed notes? I think not. Those stamps which officiate in the States in lieu of copper coinage I should hardly desire to accumulate; perhaps the fire might consume them, or if not, the gradual process of wear and tear which they are sure to undergo might leave me penniless ere long. "No, sir," says the British trader, "I am an alien; I cannot very well accept payment in these bits of paper, they are very well for you; they will pass current in your state,

but my riches must be riches in England, for I am going there to live directly; I must have solid gold, old English sovereigns, nothing else but these can make me rich." Brethren, so it is with us. If we are aliens, the treasures of this world are like those bits of paper, of little value in our esteem; and we should lay up our treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." The money of this world is not current in Paradise; and when we reach its blissful shore, if regret can be known, we shall wish that we had laid up more treasure in the land of our fatherhood, in the dear fatherland beyond the skies. Transport thy jewels to a safer country than this world; be thou rich toward God rather than before men. A certain minister collecting for a chapel, called upon a rich merchant, who generously gave him fifty pounds. As the good man was going out with sparkling eye at the liberality of the merchant, the tradesman opened a letter, and he said, "Stop a minute, I find by this letter, I have lost this morning a ship worth six thousand pounds." The poor minister trembled in his shoes, for he thought the next word would be, "Let me have the fifty pound cheque back." Instead of it, it was "Let me have the cheque back a moment," and then taking out his pen he wrote him a cheque for five hundred pounds. "As my money is going so fast, it is well," said he, "to make sure of some of it, so I will put some of it in God's bank." The man, you doubt not, went his way astonished at such a way of dealing as this, but indeed that is just what a man should do, who feels he is an alien here, and his treasure is beyond the sky.

"There is my house and portion fair;
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home:
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come."

II. It is our comfort now to remind you that although aliens *on earth*, WE ARE CITIZENS IN HEAVEN.

What is meant by our being citizens in heaven? Why, first that *we are under heaven's government.* Christ the king of heaven reigns in our hearts; the laws of glory are the laws of our consciences; our daily prayer is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The proclamations issued from the throne of glory are freely received by us, the decrees of the Great King we cheerfully obey. We are not without law to Christ. The Spirit of God rules in our mortal bodies, grace reigns through righteousness, and we wear the easy yoke of Jesus. O that he would sit as king in our hearts, like Solomon upon his throne of gold. Thine are we, Jesus, and all that we have; rule thou without a rival.

As citizens of the New Jerusalem, *we share heaven's honours.* The glory which belongs to beatified saints belongs to us, for we are already sons of God, already princes of the blood imperial; already we wear the spotless robe of Jesu's righteousness; already we have angels for our servitors, saints for our companions, Christ for our brother, God for our Father, and a crown of immortality for our reward. We share the

honours of citizenship, for we have come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

As citizens, *we have common rights in all the property of heaven.* Those wide extensive plains we sung of just now are ours; ours yon harps of gold and crowns of glory; ours the gates of pearl and walls of chrysolite; ours the azure light of the city that needs no candle nor light of the sun; ours the river of the water of life, and the twelve manner of fruits which grow on the trees planted at the side thereof; there is nought in heaven that belongeth not unto us, for our citizenship is there. "Things present, or things to come; all are ours; and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

And as we are thus under heaven's government, and share its honours and partake of its possessions, so we to-day *enjoy its delights.* Do they rejoice over sinners that are born to God—prodigals that have returned? So do we. Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same. Do they cast their crowns at Jesu's feet? Such honours as we have, we cast there too. Do they rejoice in Him? So also do we. Do they triumph, waiting for his second advent? By faith we triumph in the same. Are they to-night singing "Worthy the Lamb?" We also have sung the same tune, not to such glorious notes as theirs, but with as sincere hearts; with minstrelsy not quite so splendid, but we hope as sincere, for the Spirit gave us the music, which we have, and the Spirit gave them the thunders of their acclamations before the throne. "Our citizenship is in heaven."

Brethren, we rejoice to know also that as the result of our being citizens, or rather I ought to have said as the cause of it, our *names are written in the roll* of heaven's free-men. When, at last, the list shall be read, our names shall be read too; for where Paul and Peter, where David and Jonathan, where Abraham and Jacob shall be found, we shall be found too; numbered with them we were in the divine purpose, reckoned with them we were in the purchase on the cross, and with them shall we sit down for ever at the tables of the blessed. The small and the great are fellow-citizens and of the same household. The babes and the perfect men are recorded in the same great registry, and neither death nor hell can erase a single name.

Our citizenship then is in heaven. We have not time to extend that thought. John Calvin says of this text, "It is a most abundant source of many exhortations, which it were easy for any one to elicit from it." We are not all Calvins; but even to our smaller capacities, the subject appears to be one not readily exhausted, but rich with unfathomable joy.

III. We must now come to our third point, which is, OUR CONVERSATION IS IN HEAVEN, our walk and acts are such as are consistent with our dignity *as citizens of heaven.* Among the old Romans, when a dastardly action was proposed it was thought a sufficient refusal to answer "Romanus sum,—I am a Roman." Surely it should be a strong incentive to every good thing if we can claim to be freemen of the

Eternal City. Let our lives be conformed to the glory of our citizenship. In heaven they are holy, so must we be—so are we if our citizenship is not a mere pretence. They are happy, so must we be rejoicing in the Lord always. In heaven they are obedient, so must we be, following the faintest monitions of the divine will. In heaven they are active, so should we be, both day and night praising and serving God. In heaven they are peaceful, so should we find a rest in Christ and be at peace even now. In heaven they rejoice to behold the face of Christ, so should we be always meditating upon him, studying his beauties, and desiring to look into the truths which he has taught. In heaven they are full of love, so should we love one another as brethren. In heaven they have sweet communion one with another, so should we, who though many, are one body, be every one members one of the other. Before the throne they are free from envy and strife, ill-will, jealousy, emulation, falsehood, anger, so should we be: we should, in fact, seek while we are here to keep up the manners and customs of the good old fatherland, so that, as in Paris, the Parisian soon says, "There goes John Bull," so they should be able to say in this land, "There goes a heavenly citizen, one who is with us, and among us, but is not of us." Our very speech should be such that our citizenship should be detected. We should not be able to live long in a house without men finding out what we are. A friend of mine once went across to America, and landing I think at Boston, he knew nobody, but hearing a man say, when somebody had dropped a cask on the quay, "Look out there, or else you will make a Coggeshall job of it." He said, "You are an Essex man I know, for that is a proverb never used anywhere but in Essex: give me your hand;" and they were friends at once. So there should be a ring of true metal about our speech and conversation, so that when a brother meets us, he can say "You are a Christian, I know, for none but Christians speak like that, or act like that." "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech bewrayeth thee." Our holiness should act as a sort of freemasonry by which we know how to give the grip to the stranger, who is not a real stranger, but a fellow citizen with us, and of the household of faith. Oh! dear friends, wherever we wander, we should never forget our beloved land. In Australia, on the other side the world, or in the Cape of Good Hope, or wherever else we may be exiled, surely every Englishman's eye must turn to this fair island; and with all her faults, we must love her still. And surely let us be where we may, our eyes must turn to heaven, the happy land unstained by shadow of fault; we love her still, and love her more and more, praying for the time when our banishment shall expire, and we shall enter into our fatherland to dwell there for ever and ever. Shenstone says, "The proper means of increasing the love we bear our native country, is to reside some time in a foreign land." Sure am I that we who cry, "Woe is me, for I dwell in Mesech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar!" are sure to add "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

IV. The text says, "Our conversation is in heaven," and I think we may read it, as though it said, "OUR COMMERCE IS IN HEAVEN." We are trading on earth, but still the bulk of our trade is with heaven. We trade for trinkets in this land, but our gold and silver are in heaven.

We commune with heaven, and how? Our trade is with heaven by *meditation;* we often think of God our Father, and Christ our Brother; and, by the Spirit, the Comforter, we are brought in contemplative delight, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. Brethren, do not our *thoughts* sometimes burn within us, when we trade with that blessed land. When I have sent the ships of understanding and consideration to that land of Ophir, which is full of gold, and they have come back again laden with all manner of precious things, my thoughts have been enriched, my soul has longed to journey to that good land. Black and stormy art thou, O sea of death, but I would cross thee to reach that land of Havilah, which hath dust of gold. I know that he who is a Christian will never have his mind long off that better land. And do you know we sometimes trade with heaven in our *hymns?* They tell us of the Swiss soldiery in foreign countries, that there is a song which the band is forbidden to play, because it reminds them of the cowbells of their native hills. If the men hear it, they are sure to desert, for that dear old song revives before their eyes the wooden chalets and the cows, and the pastures of the glorious Alps, and they long to be away. There are some of our hymns that make us homesick, until we are hardly content to stop, and therefore, well did our poet end his song,

> "Filled with delight, my raptured soul,
> Can here no longer stay.
> Though Jordan's waves around us roll,
> Fearless we launch away."

I feel the spirit of Wesley, when he said—

> "O that we now might see our guide!
> O that the word were given!
> Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
> And land us all in heaven."

In times of high, hallowed, heavenly harmony of praise, the songs of angels seem to come astray, and find their way down to us, and then our songs return with them, hand in hand, and go back to God's throne, through Jesus Christ.

We trade with heaven, I hope, too, not only thus by meditation, and by thought, and by song, but *by hopes and by loves.* Our love is toward that land. How heartily the Germans sing of the dear old fatherland; but they cannot, with all their Germanic patriotism, they cannot beat the genial glow of the Briton's heart, when he thinks of his fatherland too. The Scotchman, too, wherever he may be, remembers the land of "brown heath and shaggy wood." And the Irishman, too, let him be where he will, still thinks the "Emerald Isle" the first gem of the sea. It is right that the patriot should love his country. Does not our love fervently flame towards heaven? We think we cannot speak well enough of it, and indeed here we are correct, for no exaggeration is possible. When we talk of that land of Eschol, our mouths are watering to taste its clusters; already, like David, we thirst to drink of the well that is within the gate; and we hunger after the good corn of the land.

Our ears are wanting to have done with the discords of earth, that they may open to the harmonies of heaven; and our tongues are longing to sing the melodious sonnets, sung by flaming ones above. Yea, we do love heaven, and thus it is that we prove that our commerce is with that better land.

Brethren, just as people in a foreign land that love their country always are glad to have plenty of letters from the country, I hope we have much *communication with the old fatherland.* We send our prayers there as letters to our Father, and we get his letters back in this blessed volume of his Word. You go into an Australian settler's hut, and you find a newspaper. Where from, sir? A gazette from the south of France, a journal from America? Oh no, it is a newspaper from England, addressed to him in his old mother's handwriting, bearing the postage stamp with the good Queen's face in the corner; and he likes it, though it be only a newspaper from some little pottering country town, with no news in it; yet he likes it better, perhaps, than the "Times" itself, because it talks to him about the village where he lived, and consequently touches a special string in the harp of his soul. So must it be with heaven. This book, the Bible, is the newspaper of heaven, and therefore we must love it. The sermons which are preached are good news from a far country. The hymns we sing are notes by which we tell our Father of our welfare here, and by which he whispers into our soul his continued love to us. All these are and must be pleasant to us, for our commerce is with heaven. I hope, too, we are sending a good deal home. I like to see our young fellows when they go out to live in the bush, recollect their mother at home. They say "She had a hard struggle to bring us up when our father died, and she scraped her little together to help us to emigrate." John and Tom mutually agree, "the first gold we get at the diggings we will send home to mother." And it goes home. Well, I hope you are sending a great many things home. Dear friends, I hope as we are aliens here, we are not laying up our treasure here, where we may lose it, but packing it off as quickly as we can to our own country. There are many ways of doing it. God has many banks; and they are all safe ones. We have but to serve his Church, or serve the souls which Christ has bought with his blood, or help his poor, clothe his naked, and feed his hungry, and we send our treasures beyond sea in a safe ship, and so we keep up our commerce with the skies.

V. Time has gone; those clocks will strike when thy ought not. There is a great reason why we should live like aliens and foreigners here, and that is, CHRIST IS COMING SOON. The early Church never forgot this. Did they not pant and thirst after the return of their ascended Lord? Like the twelve tribes, day and night they instantly watched for Messiah. But the Church has grown weary of this hope. There have been so many false prophets who tell us that Christ is coming, that the Church thinks He never will come; and she begins to deny, or to keep in the background the blessed doctrine of the second advent of her Lord from heaven. I do not think the fact that there have been many false prophets should make us doubt our Lord's true word. Perhaps the very frequency of these mistakes may show that there is truth at the bottom. You have a friend who is ill, and the doctor says he

cannot last long; he must die; you have called a great many times expecting to hear of his departure, but he is still alive; now the frequent errors of the physicians do not prove that your friend will not die one of these days, and that speedily too. And so, though the false prophets have said, "Lo, here," and "Lo, there," and yet Christ has not come, that does not prove that his glorious appearing will never arrive. You know I am no prophet. I do not know anything about 1866; I find quite enough to do to attend to 1862. I do not understand the visions of Daniel or Ezekiel; I find I have enough to do to teach the simple word such as I find in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Epistles of Paul. I do not find many souls have been converted to God by exquisite dissertations about the battle of Armageddon, and all those other fine things; I have no doubt prophesyings are very profitable, but I rather question whether they are so profitable to the hearers, as they may be to the preachers and publishers. I conceive that among religious people of a certain sort, the abortive explanations of prophecy issued by certain doctors gratify a craving which in irreligious people finds its food in novels and romances. People have a panting to know the future; and certain divines pander to this depraved taste, by prophesying for them, and letting them know what is coming by-and-bye. I do not know the future, and I shall not pretend to know. But I do preach this, because I know it, that *Christ will come*, for he says so in a hundred passages. The Epistles of Paul are full of the advent, and Peter's too, and John's letters are crowded with it. The best of saints have always lived on the hope of the advent. There was Enoch, he prophesied of the coming of the Son of Man. So there was another Enoch who was always talking of the coming, and saying, "Come quickly." I will not divide the house to-night by discussing whether the advent will be pre-millennial or post-millennial, or anything of that, it is enough for me that *he will come*, and "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man will come." To-night he may appear, while here we stand; just when we think that he will not come, the thief shall break open the house. We ought, therefore, to be always watching. Since the gold and silver that you have will be worthless at his advent; since your lands and estates will melt to smoke when he appeareth; since, *then* the righteous shall be rich, and the godly shall be great, lay not up your treasure here, for it may at any time vanish, at any time disappear, for Christ may at any moment come.

I think the Church would do well to be always living as if Christ might come to-day. I feel persuaded she is doing ill if she works as if he would not come till 1866, because he may come before, and he may come this moment. Let her always be living as if he would come *now*, still acting in her Master's sight, and watching unto prayer. Never mind about the last vials, fill your own vial with sweet odours and offer it before the Lord. Think what you like about Armageddon; but forget not to fight the good fight of faith. Guess not at the precise era for the destruction of Antichrist, go and destroy it yourself, fighting against it every day; but be looking forward and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man; and let this be at once your comfort and excitement to diligence—that the Saviour will soon come from heaven.

Now, I think you foreigners here present—and I hope there are a great many true aliens here—ought to feel like a poor stranded mariner on a desolate island, who has saved a few things from the wreck and built himself an old log hut, and has a few comforts round about him, but for all that he longs for home. Every morning he looks out to sea, and wonders when he shall see a sail; many times while examining the wide ocean to look for a ship, he has clapped his hands, and then wept to find he was disappointed; every night he lights his fire that there may be a blaze, so that if a ship should go by, they may send relief to the stranded mariner. Ah! that is just the way we ought to live. We have heard of one saint who used to open his window every morning when he woke, to see if Christ had come; it might be fanaticism, but better to be enthusiastic than to mind earthly things. I would have us look out each night and light the fire of prayer, that it may be burning in case the ships of heaven should go by, that blessings may come to us poor aliens and foreigners who need them so much. Let us wait patiently till the Lord's convoy shall take us on board, that we may be carried into the glories and splendour of the reign of Christ, let us always hold the log-hut with a loose hand, and long for the time when we shall get to that better land where our possessions are, where our Father lives, where our treasures lie, where all our brethren dwell. Well said our poet—

"Blest scenes, through rude and stormy seas
I onward press to you."

My beloved friends, I can assure you it is always one of the sweetest thoughts I ever know, that I shall meet with you in heaven. There are so many of you members of this Church, that I can hardly get to shake hands with you once in a year; but I shall have plenty of time then in heaven. You will know your pastor in heaven better than you do now. He loves you now, and you love him. We shall then have more time to recount our experience of divine grace, and praise God together, and sing together, and rejoice together concerning him by whom we were helped to plant, and sow, and through whom all the increase came.

"I hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven,
We all shall meet in heaven at last,
We all shall meet in heaven."

But we shall not all meet in glory; not all, unless you repent. Some of you will certainly perish, unless you believe in Christ. But why must we be divided? Oh! why not all in heaven? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Trust Christ, sinner, and heaven is thine, and mine, and we are safe for ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Hebrews xiii. 5.

WHAT power resides in "Thus saith the Lord!" The man who can grasp by faith, "He hath said," has an all-conquering weapon in his hand. What doubt will not be slain by this two-edged sword? What fear is that which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death, will not the corruptions within and the temptations without, will not the trials from above and the temptations from beneath all seem but light afflictions when we can hide ourselves behind the bulwark of "He hath said?" Whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He hath said" must be our daily resort.

Hence, let us learn, my brethren, the extreme value of *searching the Scriptures.* There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is near at hand. There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopia of Scripture, and you may still remain sick, though there is the precise remedy that would meet your disease, unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "He hath said." Should we not, beside reading Scripture, *store our memories richly with the promises of God?* We can recollect the sayings of great men; we treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought we not to be profound in our knowledge of the words of God? The Scriptures should be the classics of a Christian, and as our orators quote Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, when they would clinch a point, so we should be able to quote the promises of God when we would solve a difficulty or overthrow a doubt. "He hath said," is the foundation of all riches and the fountain of all comfort; let it dwell in you richly as "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And, oh, my brethren, *how diligently should we test the Scriptures!*

Besides searching them by reading, and treasuring them by memory, we should test them by experience, and so often as a promise is proven to be true we should make a mark against it, and note that we also can say, as did one of old, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." "Wait on the Lord," said Isaiah, and then he added "Wait, *I say*, on the Lord," as if his own experience led him to echo the voice of God to his hearers. Test the promise, take God's bank-note to the counter, and mark if it be cashed. Grasp the lever, which he ordains to lift your trials, and try if it possesses real power. Cast this divine tree into the bitter waters of your Marah, and learn how it will sweeten them. Take this salt, and throw it into the turbid waters, and witness if they be not made sweet, as were the waters of old by the prophet Elisha. Taste and see that the Lord is good, for there is no want to them that fear him.

The Apostles, you will notice, like their Master, were always very ready at quotations. Though they were inspired men, and could have used fresh words, yet they preferred, as an example to us, to quote "He hath said;" let us do the same, for, though the words of ministers may be sweet, the words of God are sweeter; and though original thoughts may have the novelty of freshness, yet the ancient words of God have the ring, and the weight, and the value of old and precious coins, and they shall not be found wanting in the day when we shall use them.

It seems from our text that "He hath said" is not only useful to chase away doubts, fears, difficulties, and devils, but that it also yieldeth nourishment to all our graces. You perceive that when the apostle would make us contented, he says, "Be content with such things as ye have, for *he hath said;*" and when he would make us bold and courageous, he puts it, "*He* hath said, therefore, *we* may boldly say, God is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me." When the apostle would nourish faith, he does it by quoting from Scripture the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Gideon, of Barak, and of Jephthah. When he would nourish our patience, he says, "Ye remember the patience of Job;" or if it be our prayerfulness, he says, "Elias was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed and prevailed." "*He hath said*" is food for every grace as well as death for every sin. Here you have nourishment for that which is good, and poison for that which is evil. Search ye, then, the Scriptures, for so shall ye grow healthy, strong, and vigorous in the divine life.

We turn at once, with great pleasure, to the wonderful words of our text, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I have no doubt you are aware that our translation does not convey the whole force of the original, and that it would hardly be possible in English to give the full weight of the Greek. We might render it, "He hath said, I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee;" for, though that would be not a literal, but rather a free rendering, yet, as there are five negatives in the Greek, we do not know how to give their force in any other way. Two negatives nullify each other in our language; but here, in the Greek, they intensify the meaning following one after another, as I suppose David's five stones out of the brook would have done if the first had not been enough to

make the giant reel. The verse we sung just now is a very good rendering of the original—

> "'The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
> I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
> That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
> I'll never, no never, no never forsake.'"

Here you have the five negatives very well placed, and the force of the Greek, as nearly as possible, given.

In trying to expound this five-fold assurance, this quintessence of consolation, we shall have to draw your attention, first of all, to *an awful condition*, or what is negatived; secondly, to *a gracious promise*, or what is positively guaranteed; next, we shall observe *notable occasions* or times when this promise was uttered; a few words upon certain *sweet confirmations* which prove the text to be true; and then, in the fifth place, *necessary conclusions* which flow from the words of the promise.

I. First of all, then, AN AWFUL CONDITION—lost and FORSAKEN of God! I am quite certain I shall fail in attempting to describe this state of mind. I have thought of it, dreamed of it, and felt it in such feeble measure as a child of God can feel it, but how to describe it I know not.

1. *Forsaking* implies *an utter loneliness.* Put a traveller in a vast howling wilderness, where for many a league there is no trace of man—no foot-step of traveller. The solitary wretch cries for help—the hollow echo of the rocks is his only reply. No bird in the air; not even a prowling jackal in the waste; not an insect in the sunbeam to keep him company; not even a solitary blade of grass to remind him of God! Yet, even there he is not alone: for yon bare rocks prove a God, and the hot sand beneath his feet, and the blazing sun above his head, all witness to a present Deity. But what would be the loneliness of a man forsaken of God! No migration could be so awful as this, for he says, "If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea *thou art there.*" Such a state were worse than hell, for David says, "If I make my bed in hell *thou art there.*" Loneliness is a feeling which none of us delight in. Solitude may have some charms, but they who are forced to be her captives have not discovered them. A transient solitude may give pleasure; to be alone, utterly alone, is terrible; to be alone, *without God*, is such an emphasis of loneliness, that I defy the lip even of a damned spirit to express the horror and anguish that must be concentrated in it. There is far more than you and I dream of in the language of our Lord Jesus, when he says, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone.*" *Alone!* You remember he once said, "Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." There is no agony in that sentence, but what must be his grief when he says—"I have trodden the wine-press *alone!*" "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the cry of human nature in its uttermost dismay. Thank God, you and I by this promise are taught that we never shall know the desperate loneliness of being forsaken of God; yet, this is what it would be if he should forsake us!

2. Mingling with this mournful solitude is a sense of *utter helplessness.* Power belongeth unto God; withdraw the Lord, and the strong men must utterly fail. The archangel without God passes away and is

not; the everlasting hills do bow, and the solid pillars of the earth are dissolved. Without God our dust returneth to the earth; without God our spirit mourneth like David, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel." Christ knew what this was when he said, "I am a worm, and no man." He was so utterly broken, so emptied of all power, that as he hung with dislocated limbs upon the cross, he cried, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; thou hast brought me into the dust of death." No broken reed or smoking flax can be so feeble as a soul forsaken of God. Our state would be as deplorably destitute as that of Ezekiel's infant, deserted and cast into the open field with none to swaddle and none to care for it, left utterly to perish and to die,—such should we be if we could be forsaken of God! Glorious are those negatives which shut us in from all fear of this calamity.

3. To be forsaken of God implies *utter friendlessness*. A thousand times let Jehovah be blessed that very few of us have ever known what it is to be friendless! There have been times in the experience of some of us when we felt that we stood without a friend in the particular spot which we then occupied, for we had a grief which we could not entrust to any other heart. Every man who is eminently useful in the Church will know seasons when as the champion of Israel he must go forth alone. This, however, is compensated by stronger faith, and the moral grandeur of solitary heroism. But what must it be to be some poor wretch whose parents have long since been buried; who has lost his most distant relatives; who, passing along the street remembers the name of one who was once his father's friend, knocks at the door, and is repulsed; recollects another—and this is his last hope—one he played with in his infancy—stands at that door asking for charity and is bidden to go his way, and paces the cold November streets while the rain is pouring down, feeling to his utter dismay that no friend breathes for him? Should he return to his own parish it would be like going to his own dungeon, and if he enters the workhouse no eye there will flash sympathy upon him! He is utterly friendless and alone! I believe that many a suicide has been produced by the want of a friend. As long as a man feels he has some one loving him, he has something worth living for; but when the last friend is gone and we feel that we are floating on a raft far out at sea, with not a sail in sight, and we cry, "Welcome death!" Our Lord and Master was brought to this state, and knew what it was to be forsaken, for he had no friends left. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." "All the disciples forsook him and fled." Brethren, many saints have lost all their friends, but have bravely borne the trial, for turning their eye to heaven, they have felt that though without friends they were still befriended. They have heard the voice of Jesus say, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you;" and, made strong by Divine friendship, they have felt that they were not utterly bereaved. But to be forsaken *of God!* Oh, may you and I never know it! To be without a friend in heaven; to look to that throne of glory and to see the blackness of darkness there; to turn to mercy and receive a frown; to fly to love and receive a rebuke; to turn to God and find that his ear is heavy that he will not hear, and his hand restrained that he will not help—oh! this is terror, terror heaped on terror, to be thus forsaken!

4. Loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness—add these together, and then put the next—*hopelessness*. A man forsaken of men may still entertain some hope. But let him be forsaken of God, and then hope hath failed; the last window is shut; not a ray of light now streams into the thick Egyptian darkness of his mind. Life is death; death is damnation—damnation in its lowest deeps. Let him look to men, and they are broken reeds; let him turn to angels, and they are avengers; let him look to death, and even the tomb affords no refuge. Look where he will, blank, black despair seizes hold upon him. Our blessed Lord knew this when lover and friend had been put far from him, and his acquaintance into darkness. It was only his transcendent faith which enabled him after all to say "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The black shadow of this utter hopelessness went over him when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and he "sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."

5. To make up this five-fold forsaking, against which we have the five negatives, let us add to all this loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness, and hopelessness, a sense of *unutterable agony*. We speak of agony, but to feel it is a very different thing. Misery and despair—the *wrestling* of these with the spirit till the spirit is trodden down, and crushed, and broken, and chooses strangling rather than life; a horrible sense of every evil having made one's heart its den; a consciousness that we are the target for all God's arrows; that *all* God's waves and billows have gone over us; that he hath forgotten to be gracious; that he will be merciful to us no more; that he hath in anger shut up the bowels of his compassion—this is a part of being forsaken of God which only lost spirits in hell can know! Our unbelief sometimes lets us get a glimpse of what this would be, but it is only a glimpse, only a glimpse; let us thank God that we are delivered from all fear of this tremendous evil. By five wounds doth our Redeemer slay our unbelief.

Brethren, if God should leave us, mark the result: I picture to myself the very best state of one forsaken of God—it is uncertainty and chance. I would rather be an atom, which hath God with it, predestinating its track and forcing it onward according to his own will, than I would be an archangel left to my own choice, to do as I would and to act as I please, without the control of God; for an archangel, left without God, would soon miss his way, and fall to hell; or he would melt away, and drop and die; but the tiny atom, having God with it, would fulfil its predestinated course; it would be ever in a sure track, and throughout eternity would have as much potence in it as at its first creation. I cannot think why some people are so fond of free-will. I believe free-will is the delight of sinners, but that God's will is the glory of saints. There is nothing I desire more to get rid of than my own will, and to be absorbed into the will and purpose of my Lord. To do according to the will of Him who is most good, most true, most wise, most mighty, seems to me to be heaven. Let others choose the dignity of independence, I crave the glory of being wholly dead in Christ, and only alive in him. Oh! dear friends, if the Lord should forsake us, to say the best of it, our course would be uncertain, and, ere long it would end in nothing-

ness. We know, further, that if God should forsake the best saint alive, that man would immediately fall into sin. He now stands securely on yonder lofty pinnacle, but his brain would reel and he would fall, if secret hands did not uphold him. He now picks his steps carefully; take away grace from him and he would roll in the mire, and wallow in it like other men. Let the godly be forsaken of his God, and he would go from bad to worse, till his conscience, now so tender, would be seared as with a hot iron. Next he would ripen into an atheist or a blasphemer, and he would come to his dying bed foaming at the mouth with rage; would come before the bar of his Maker with a curse upon his lip; and in eternity, left and forsaken of God, he would sink to hell with the condemned, ay, and among the damned he would have the worst place, lower than the lowest, finding in the lowest depths a lower depth, finding in the wrath of God something more dreadful than the ordinary wrath which falleth upon common sinners!

When we thus describe being forsaken of God, is it not satisfactory to the highest degree to remember that we have God's word for it five times over, "I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee?" I know those who caricature Calvinism say we teach that let a man live as he likes, yet if God be with him, he will be safe at the last. We teach no such thing, and our adversaries know better. They know that our doctrines are invulnerable if they will state them correctly, and that the only way in which they can attack us is to slander us and to misrepresent what we teach. Nay, verily, we say not so, but we say that where God begins the good work, the man will never live as he likes, or if he does, he will like to live as God would have him live; that where God begins a good work he carries it on; that man is never forsaken of God, nor does he forsake God, but is kept even to the end.

II. We have before us now, in the second place, A GRACIOUS PROMISE, or what is positively guaranteed.

What is guaranted in this promise? Beloved, herein doth God give to his people everything. "*I* will never leave thee." Then no attribute of God can cease to be engaged for us. Is he mighty? He will show himself strong on the behalf of them that trust him. Is HE love? Then with everlasting lovingkindness will he have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity every one of them to its fullest extent shall be engaged on our side. Moreover, whatsoever God hath, whether it be in the lowest hades or in the highest heaven, whatever can be contained in infinity or can be held within the circumference of eternity, whatever, in fine, can be in him who filleth all things, and yet is greater than all things, shall be with his people for ever, since "He hath said, *I* will never leave you, nor forsake you." How one might enlarge here, but I forbear; ye yourselves know that to sum up "all things" is a task beyond all human might.

III. More fully, however, to expound this promise, I would remind you of the five OCCASIONS in which it occurs in Scripture. The number five runs all through our subject. The sense and spirit of the text are to be found in innumerable places, and possibly there may be some other passages which approximate so very nearly to our text, that you might say they

also are repetitions, but I think there are five which may clearly take the priority.

1. One of the first instances is to be found in Genesis xxviii. 15. "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Here we have this promise in the case of *a man of trials.* More than either Abraham or Isaac, Jacob was the son of tribulation. He was now flying away from his father's house, leaving the over-fondness of a mother's attachment, abhorred by his elder brother, who sought his blood. He lies down to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, with the hedges for his curtains, with the earth for his bed, and the heavens for his canopy; and as he sleeps thus friendless, solitary, and alone, God saith to him "I will never, never leave thee." Mark his after career. He is guided to Padan-aram; God, his guide, leaves him not. At Padan-aram Laban cheats him, wickedly and wrongfully cheats him in many ways; but God doth not leave him, and he is more than a match for the thievish Laban. He flies at last with his wives and children; Labān, in hot haste pursues him, but the Lord does not leave him; Mizpah's Mount bears witness that God can stop the pursuer, and change the foe into a friend. Esau comes against him; let Jabbok testify to Jacob's wrestlings, and through the power of him who never did forsake his servant, Esau kissed his brother, whom once he thought to slay. Anon Jacob dwells in tents and booths at Succoth; he journeys up and down throughout the land, and his sons treacherously slay the Shechemites. Then the nations round about seek to avenge their death, but the Lord again interposes, and Jacob is delivered. Poor Jacob is bereaven of his sons. He cries—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But they are not against him; God has not left him, for he has not yet done everything that he had spoken to him of. The old man goes into Egypt; his lips are refreshed while he kisses the cheeks of his favourite Joseph, and until the last, when he gathers up his feet in the bed and sings of that coming Shiloh and the sceptre that should not depart from Judah, good old Jacob proves that in six troubles God is with his people, and in seven he doth not forsake them; that even to hoar hairs he is the same, and until old age he doth carry them. You Jacobs, full of affliction, you tried and troubled heirs of heaven, he hath said to you, each one of you —oh! believe him!—I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

2. The next instance in which we find this same promise is in Deuteronomy xxxi. 6. Here we find it spoken, not so much to individuals as to the whole body collectively. Moses said unto the people of Judah, by the Word of God, "Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Beloved, we may take this promise as being spoken to God's Church, *as a Church.* These people were to fight the accursed nations of Canaan, to drive out the giants, and the men who had chariots of iron, but the Lord said he would never leave them, nor did he, till from Dan to Beersheba the favoured

race possessed the promised land, and the tribes went up to Jerusalem with the voice of joyful song. Now, as the Church of God, let us remember that the land lieth before us, and we are called of God to go up and possess it. I would it were my lot yet more and more, like Joshua, to lead you from one place to another, smiting the enemies of the Lord and extending the kingdom of Messias! Let us undertake what we may, we shall never fail. Let us, by faith, dare great things, and we shall do great things. Let us venture upon notable exploits which shall seem fanatical to reason and absurd to men of prudence, for he hath said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." If the Church of God would but know that her Lord cannot leave her, she might attempt greater things than she has ever done, and the success of her attempts would be most certain and sure. God never can forsake a praying people, nor cast off a labouring Church; he must bless us even to the end.

3. The third occasion upon which this promise was made is in Joshua i. 5., where the Lord says to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Now this is *a minister's text.* If we be called to lead the people, to bear the brunt of the fight, the burden and heat of the day, let us treasure up this as our precious consolation, he will not fail us nor forsake us. It needs not that I should tell you that it is not every man who can stand first in the ranks, and that, albeit there is no small share of honour given by God to such a man, yet there is a bitterness in his lot which no other men can know. There are times when, if it were not for faith, we would give up the ghost, and, were not the Master with us, we would turn our back and fly, like Jonah, unto Nineveh. But if any of you be called to occupy prominent positions in God's Church, bind this about your arm and it shall make you strong; He hath said to you, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Go, in this thy might; the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

4. On the next occasion, this same promise was given by David in his last moments to his son Solomon, 1 Chronicles xxviii. 20. David was speaking of what he himself by experience had proved to be true, and he declares—"Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." Some Christians are placed where they need much *prudence, discretion, and wisdom.* You may take this for your promise. The Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon; she put to him many difficult questions, but God did not leave him, nor forsake him, and he was able to answer them all. As judge over Israel, many knotty points were brought before him; you remember the child and the harlots, and how wisely he decided the case. The building of the temple was a very mighty work—the like of which the earth had never seen, but, by wisdom given to him, the stones were fashioned, and laid one upon another, till at last the top stone was brought out with shoutings. You shall do the same, O man of business, though yours be a very responsible situation. You shall finish your course, O careful worker, though there are many eyes that watch for your halting.

You shall do the same, sister, though you need to have seven eyes rather than two; you shall hear the voice of God saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Thou shalt never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

5. Once more, and perhaps this fifth occasion may be the most comforting to the most of you, Isaiah xli. 17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." You may be brought to this state to-day. Your soul may *need Christ*, but you may not be able to find him. You may feel that without the mercy which comes from the atoning blood you are lost. You may have gone to works and ceremonies, to prayings and doings, to alms-givings and to experiences, and have found them all dried wells, and now you can hardly pray; for your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth for thirst. Now in your worst condition, brought to the lowest state into which a creature ever can be cast, Christ will not forsake you, he will appear for your help.

Surely, one of these five occasions must suit you, and let me here remind you that whatever God has said to any one saint he has said to all. When he opens a well for one man it is that all may drink. When the manna falls, it is not only for those in the wilderness, but we by faith do eat the manna still. No promise is of private interpretation. When God openeth a granary-door to give out food, there may be some one starving man who is the occasion of its being opened, but all the hungry besides may come and feed too. Whether he gave the word to Abraham or to Moses matters not; he has given it to thee as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for thee; nor a wide mercy too extensive for thee. Lift up now thine eyes to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, for all this is thine. Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise, for the land is all thine own. There is not a brook of living water of which thou mayest not drink. If the land floweth with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk. The fattest of the kine, yea, and the sweetest of the wines, let all be thine, for there is no denial of any one of them to any saint. Be thou bold to believe, for he hath said, "I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." To put everything in one, there is nothing you can want, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection-morning, nothing in heaven that is not contained in this text—"I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

IV. I shall give five blows to drive home the nail while I speak upon THE SWEET CONFIRMATIONS of this most precious promise.

1. Let me remind you that the Lord will not and cannot leave his people, because of *his relationship to them*. He is your *Father;* will your Father leave you? Has he not said—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Would you, being evil, leave your child to perish? Never, never! Remember,

Christ is your *husband*. Would you, a husband, neglect your wife? Is it not a shame to a man, unless he nourisheth and cherisheth her even as his own body, and will Christ become one of these ill husbands? Hath he not said—"I hate putting away," and will he ever put thee away? Remember, thou art *part of his body*. No man yet ever hated his own flesh. Thou mayest be but as a little finger, but will he leave his finger to rot, to perish, to starve? Thou mayest be the least honourable of all the members, but is it not written that upon these he bestoweth abundant honour, and so our uncomely parts have abundant comeliness? If he be father, if he be husband, if he be head, if he be all-in-all, how can he leave thee? Think not so hardly of thy God.

2. Then, next, *his honour* binds him never to forsake thee. When we see a house half-built and left in ruins, we say, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Shall this be said of thy God, that he began to save thee and could not bring thee to perfection? Is it possible that he will break his word, and so stain his truth? Shall men be able to cast a slur upon his power, his wisdom, his love, his faithfulness? No! thank God, no! "I give," saith he "unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." If thou shouldest perish, believer, hell would ring with diabolical laughter against the character of God; and if ever one whom Jesus undertook to save should perish, then the demons of the pit would point the finger of scorn for ever against a defeated Christ, against a God that undertook but went not through.

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

3. And if that be not enough, wilt thou remember besides this that *the past* all goes to prove that he will not forsake thee. Thou hast been in deep waters; hast thou been drowned? Thou hast walked through the fires; hast thou been burned? Thou hast had six troubles; hath he forsaken thee? Thou hast gone down to the roots of the mountains, and the weeds have been wrapped about thy head; hath he not brought thee up again? Thou hast borne great and sore troubles; but hath he not delivered thee? Say, when did he leave thee? Testify against him; if thou hast found him forgetful, then doubt him. If thou hast found him unworthy of thy confidence, then disown him, but not till then. The past is vocal with a thousand songs of gratitude, and every note therein proveth by an indisputable logic that he will not forsake his people.

4. And if that be not enough ask thy father and *the saints that have gone before*. Did ever any perish trusting in Christ? I have heard that some whom Jehovah loved have fallen from grace, and have been lost. I have heard lips of ministers thus prostitute themselves to falsehood, but I know that such never was the case. He keepeth all his saints; not one of them hath perished; they are in his hand, and have hitherto been preserved. David mourneth, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me;" yet, he crieth, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." Jonah laments, "The earth with her bars was about me for ever;" and yet,

ere long he says, "Salvation is of the Lord." Ye glorified ones above, through much tribulation ye have inherited the kingdom, and wearing your white robes, ye smile from your thrones of glory and say to us, "Doubt not the Lord, neither distrust him, he hath not forsaken his people nor cast off his chosen."

5. Beloved friends, there is *no reason why he should* cast us off. Can you adduce any reason why he should cast you away? Is it your poverty, your nakedness, your peril, the danger of your life? In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. Do you say it is your sins? Then I answer sin can never be a cause why God should cast away his people, for they were full of sin when he at first embraced their persons, and espoused their cause. That would have been a cause why he never should have loved them, but having loved them when they were dead in trespasses and sins, their sin can never be a reason for leaving them. Besides, the Apostle says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,"—and sin is one of the things present, and I fear it is one of the things to come—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." O child of God, there is no fear of your misusing this precious truth. The base-born professor of godliness may say, "I will sin, for God will not cast me away;" but you will not, ye heirs of heaven; rather you will bind this about your heart, and say "Now will I love him who having loved his own, loves them even unto the end." Glory be to God,

> "'Midst all my sin, and care, and woe,
> His Spirit will not let me go."

Go, ye slaves that fear the curse of God, and sweat and toil; we are his sons, and we know he cannot expel us from his heart. May God deliver us from the infamous bondage of the doctrine which makes men fear that God may be unfaithful, that Christ may divorce his own spouse, may let the members of his own body perish; that he may die for them and yet not save them. If there be any truth taught us in Scripture, it is that the children of God cannót perish If this Book teaches anything whatever, if it be not all a fiction from beginning to end, it teaches in a hundred places that "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but the covenant of his love cannot depart from us saith the Lord that hath mercy upon us."

V. And now, fifthly, the SUITABLE CONCLUSIONS to be drawn from this doctrine.

1. One of the first is *contentment.* The apostle says, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Ishmael, the son of Hagar, had his water in a bottle; and he might have laughed at Isaac because Isaac had no bottle, but then here was the difference between them—Isaac lived by the well. Now some of us have little enough in this world; we have no bottle of water, no stock in hand; but then we live by the well, and

that is better still. To depend upon the daily providence of a faithful God, is better than to be worth twenty thousand pounds a year.

2. *Courage* is the next lesson. Let us boldly say, "God is my helper, why should I fear what man can do unto me." A child of God afraid! Why, there is nothing more contrary to his nature. If any would persecute you, look them in the face and bear it cheerfully. If they laugh at you, let them laugh; you can laugh when they shall howl. If any despise you, be content to be despised by fools, and to be misunderstood by madmen. It were hard if the world loved us; it is an easy thing if the world hateth us. We are so used to be spoken of as altogether vile in our motives and selfish in our objects; so used to hear our adversaries misconstrue our best words and pull our sentences to pieces, that if they were to do anything else but howl, we should think ourselves unworthy. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth."

3. Then next, *we ought to cast off our despondency.* Some of you came here this morning as black as the weather. Just now we saw some gleams of sunshine peering through those side windows, until our friends hastened to draw the blinds, to shut out the dazzling brightness from their eyes; I hope, however, you will not shut out the rays of holy joy which break in upon you now. No, since he has said, "I will never leave nor forsake thee," leave your troubles in your pews, and bear away a song.

4. And then, my brethren, here is argument for *the greatest possible delight.* How we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable if He will never leave us! Mere songs are not enough; shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

5. And, lastly, what ground there is here *for faith!* Let us lean upon our God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves upon his faithfulness as we do upon our beds, bringing all our weariness to his dear rest. Now, right on our God let us cast the burdens of our bodies, and our souls, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

Oh, I wish this promise belonged to you all! I would give my right hand if it could! But some of you must not touch it; it does not belong to some of you, for it is the exclusive property of the man who trusts in Christ. "Oh!" saith one, "then I will trust in Christ." Do it, soul, do it; and if thou trustest in him he will never leave thee. Black as thou art, he will wash thee; he will never leave thee. Wicked as thou art, he will make thee holy; he will never leave thee. Though thou hast nought that should win his love, he will press thee to his bosom; he will never leave thee. Living or dying, in time or in eternity, he will never forsake thee, but will surely bring thee to his right hand, and say, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

May God seal these five negatives upon our memories and hearts for Christ's sake. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST—PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 2ND, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—Hebrews ii. 10.

BELIEVING that God foreknoweth all things, we cannot but come to the conclusion that he foreknew the fall, and that it was but an incident in the great method by which he would glorify himself. Foreknowing the fall, and fore-ordaining and predestinating the plan by which he would rescue his chosen out of the ruins thereof, he was pleased to make that plan a manifestation of all his attributes, and, to a very great extent, a declaration of his wisdom. You do not find in the method of salvation a single tinge of folly. The Greeks may call it folly, but they are fools themselves. The gospel is the highest refinement of wisdom, ay, of divine wisdom; and we cannot help perceiving that not only in its main features, but in its little points, in the details and the minutiæ, the wisdom of God is most clearly to be seen. Just as in the making of the tabernacle in the wilderness not a single loop or tache was left to human chance or judgment, so in the great scheme of salvation, not a single fragment was left to the human will or to the folly of the flesh. It appears to be a law of the divine action that everything *must* be according to the fitness and necessity involved in perfect wisdom—"*It behoved* that Christ should suffer;" and in our text we find, "*It became him* from whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, that he should make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It seemed to be but the order of natural fitness and congruity, in accordance with the nature and character of God, that the plan of salvation should be just what it is. Oh! how careful should we be who have to preach it never to alter it in the slightest degree. How should we lift our prayers to heaven that God would give us a clear understanding, first, of what we have to teach, and then a clear method of teaching what we have learned, so that no mistake may be made here, for a mistake here would mar that express image of God which shines in the gospel, and prevent our hearers from seeing the beautiful fitness and proportion which are so adapted to reveal the perfect

character of God. We say the plan *must* be what it is; it could not be otherwise so as to be in keeping with the divine character; and, therefore, it is imperative upon us that we make no alteration in it, no, not of a word, lest we should hear the Apostle's anathema hissing through the air like a thunderbolt from God—"If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that ye have received let him be accursed!"

Our text invites us to the consideration of three particulars: first, *that Christ is a perfect Saviour;* secondly, *that he became so through suffering;* and thirdly, *that his being made perfect through suffering, will ennoble and dignify the whole work of grace.* "It became him"—it seemed fitting—"that in bringing many sons unto glory he should make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

I. To begin, then, first of all with the joyous thought, so well known to you all, but so necessary still to be repeated, that THE LORD JESUS IS A PERFECT SAVIOUR.

1. For, first, *he is perfectly adapted for the work of saving. The singular constitution of his nature* adapts him to his office. He is *God.* It was necessary that he should be so. Who but God could sustain the enormous weight of human guilt? What but Divinity was equal to bear the awful load of wrath which was to be carried upon his shoulders? What knowledge but Omniscience could understand all the evil, and what power but Omnipotence could undo that evil? That Christ is God must ever be a theme for grateful admiration to his people. They who reject the divinity of Christ can have but a poor foundation to rest upon; the fickle sand, would seem to be more stable than the basis of their hope. It is enough for one man to work out his own obedience; more than enough for one man to bear wrath for himself; how, then, could he do it for others, and for those countless multitudes whose ruin was to be retrieved? But, beloved, we know that had he only been God yet still he would not have been fitted for a perfect Saviour, unless he had become *man.* Man had sinned; man must suffer. It was man in whom God's purposes had been for a while defeated; it must be in man that God must triumph over his great enemy. He *must* take upon himself the seed of Abraham, that he may stand in their room and stead, and become their federal head. An angel, we believe, could not have suffered on the tree; it would not have been possible for an angelic nature to have borne those agonies which the wrath of God demanded as an expiation for guilt. But when we see the Lord Jesus before us, being verily the Son of Man, and as certainly the Son of God, we perceive that now Job's desire is granted; we have a daysman that can lay his hand on both, and touch humanity in its weakness, and divinity in its strength; can make a ladder between earth and heaven; can bridge the distance which separates fallen manhood from the perfection of the eternal God. No nature but one so complex as that of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, would have been perfectly adapted for the work of salvation.

And as he was adapted in his nature, so, beloved, it is very clear to us that he was also adapted by his *experience.* A physician should have some acquaintance with disease; how shall he know the remedy if he be ignorant of the malady. Our Saviour knew all because

"he took our infirmities and he bare our sicknesses. He was tempted in all points, like as we are." He looked not at sin from the distance of heaven, but he walked, and lived in the midst of it. He did not pass hurriedly through the world as one might hastily walk through an hospital without clearly understanding the disease, but he lived his more than thirty years in the very centre of it, seeing sin in all its shapes; yes, seeing it in shapes that you and I have not yet seen. He saw it in demoniac forms, for hell was let loose for a season, that the combat might be the more terrible and the victory the more glorious. He saw sin carried to its most aggravated extent, when it crucified God himself, and nailed Jesus, the heir of heaven, to the accursed tree. He understood the disease; he was no empiric; he had studied the whole case through; deceitful as the human heart is, Jesus knew it; fickle as it is in its various appearances—Protean as it is in its constantly varying shapes, Christ knew and understood it all. His life-long walking of the hospital of human nature had taught him the disease. He knew the *subjects, too, upon whom to operate.* He knew man, and what was in man; yes, better than the most skilled surgeon can know by experiment. He knew by experience. He himself took our infirmities and bare our sorrows. He was himself the patient, himself the medicine. He took upon himself the nature of the race he came to save, and so every feeling made him perfect in his work; every pang instructed him; every throb of anguish made him wise, and rendered him the more accomplished to work out the purposes of God in the bringing of the many sons unto glory. If you will add to his perfect experience *his marvellous character*, you will see how completely adapted he was to the work. For a Saviour, we need one who is full of love, whose love will make him firm to his purpose, whose love will constrain him to yoke every power and talent that he has to the great work. We want one with zeal so flaming, that it will eat him up; of courage so indomitable, that he will face every adversary rather than forego his end; we want one, at the same time, who will blend with this brass of courage the gold of meekness and of gentleness; we want one who will be determined to deal fearlessly with his adversaries, who will put on zeal as a cloak, and will deal tenderly and compassionately with the disease of sin-sick men;—such an one we have in Christ. No man can read the character of Christ with any sort of understanding without saying, "That is *the man* I want as my friend." The argument which Christ used was a very powerful one—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." Why? "*For I am meek and lowly in heart.*" The character of Christ qualifies him to be the world's Saviour, and there is something in his character, when properly understood, which is so attractive, that we may well say—

> "His worth if all the nations knew,
> Sure the whole world would love him too."

If we had to make a Saviour ourselves, and it were left to a parliament of the wisest senators of the race to form an ideal personage who should just meet man's case, if the Divine One had lent us his own wisdom for the occasion, we could only have desired just such a person as

Christ Jesus. In manhood we should have needed just such traits of character as we see in the person of Immanuel, the Son of God. [illegible] the unconverted man, Christ is ready to be a Saviour to him. We know that the saints, without exception, will rejoice that Jesus is exalted to be a Saviour to them; for though he became one of our race and, counting it no robbery to be equal with God, suffered like ourselves, bearer of all the ills of mankind, and yet made us free from sin, holy, harmless, undefiled: even so in all respects he undertook and accomplish the great work; Jesus was a perfect Saviour to us.

2. For moreover, as Christ is thus perfectly adapted, *so he is perfectly able to be a Saviour.* He is a perfect Saviour by reason of ability. He is now able to meet *all the needs* of sinners. That need is very great. The sinner needs *everything.* The beggar at the door of Christ, asks not for crumbs or groats, but needs all that Christ can give. Nothing short of all-sufficiency can ever meet the wants of a poor son of Adam fallen by sin. Christ Jesus hath all fulness dwelling in himself. "More than all in Christ we find:" pardon in his blood; justification in his righteousness; wisdom in his teaching; sanctification in his Spirit. He is the God of all grace to us. Deep as our miseries and boundless as our sins may be, the mines of his unfathomable love, his grace, and his power, exceed them still. Send a spirit throughout all nations to hunt up the most abject of all races; discover, at last, a tribe of men degenerated as low as the beasts; select out of these the vilest, one who has been a cannibal; bring before us one lost to all sense of morality, one who has put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, light for darkness and darkness for light; let that man be red with murder, let him be black with lust; let villainies infest his heart as innumerable and detestable as the frogs of Egypt's plague—yet Christ is able to meet that man's case. It is impossible for us to produce an exaggeration of the work of sin and the devil, which Christ shall not be able to overtop by the plenitude of his power. "He is able to save *unto the uttermost* them that come unto God by him." That divine word which made heaven and earth, is able to make a new creature in Christ Jesus; and that power which never can be exhausted, which after making ten thousand times ten thousand worlds could make as many more, is all in Christ, and is linked with the virtue of his merit and the prevalence of his blood, and therefore he hath all power in heaven and in earth to save souls. As he has this power to meet all needs, so he can meet all need *in all cases.* There has never been brought to Christ a man whom he could not heal. If born blind, a touch of his finger has given sight; if lame he has made him leap like a hart; ay, and though dead, the voice of Christ has made Lazarus come forth from his tomb. Some troubled consciences think their case is not in the list of possible cures, let us assure them it must be. I would like to know who is the vilest sinner, for if I knew him I should feel delighted to behold him, since I should see a platform upon which my Lord's grace might stand to be the more gloriously resplendent in the eyes of men. Are you the vilest of the vile this morning? Do you feel so? Does Satan say you are so? Then I pray you do my Master the honour to believe that he is still able to meet your case, and that he

can save even you. Though you think yourselves the ends of the earth, the very ravellings of the garment of manhood, yet "look unto him and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for he is God, and besides him there is none else." As he can meet all cases, so he can meet all cases *at all times*. One villainy of hell is to tell sinners that it is too late. While the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner that returns shall find mercy in him. At the eleventh hour he saved the thief; let not this be a reason for your procrastination—that were ungrateful; let it, however, be a cause for hope—that were reasonable. He is able to save you *now*. Now, at this hour, at this very moment, if thou dost trust him thou art saved. If now, without an hour's delay to retire to thy chamber, without even five minutes' time elapsing in which to prepare thy soul for him, if now thou canst believe that Christ can save thee, he will do it, do it at this moment. His cures are instantaneous; a word, and it is done. Swift as the lightning's flash is the accomplishment of his purpose of grace. As the lightning flasheth from the west even to the east, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be at his last great advent; and so is it in his marvellous advent into the hearts of sinners whom he ordains to save. Able to meet all cases, able to meet them at this very hour is Christ. Sinner, Christ is perfectly able to save thee, and to save thee perfectly. I know the will and wit of man want to be doing something to begin salvation. Oh, how wicked is this! Christ is Alpha, why would you take his place and be an Alpha to yourselves? I have had this week two cases in which I have had to hold a solemn argument with troubled souls about this matter. Oh! the "ifs" and "buts" they put; the "perhaps," and "and," and "peradventures," and "Oh, I don't feel this," and "I don't feel that!" Oh, that wicked questioning of Christ! While talking with them, endeavouring to comfort them, and I hope not unsuccessfully, I was led to feel in my own mind what an awful crime it is to doubt God, to doubt Him that speaks from above, to doubt Him when he hangs bleeding on the tree. While it seemed to me to be such a hard thing to bring a sinner to trust Christ, yet it did seem, on the other hand, such a sin of sins, such a master-piece of iniquity that we do not trust Christ at once. Here is the plan of salvation—trust Christ and he will save you. But they say "I do not feel enough;" or else "I have been such a sinner;" or else "I cannot feel the joy I want;" or else "I cannot pray as I would." Then I put it to them. Do you trust Christ? "Yes," they will say, "I do trust Christ, and yet I am not saved." Now, this makes God a liar, for he says, "He that believeth in him is not condemned, and he that believeth on him hath everlasting life." When a soul professes to trust Christ, and yet says "I am afraid he will not save me," what is this but telling the Eternal God to his face that he is false? Can you suppose a grosser infamy than this? Oh! that men were wise, that they would take God at his word, and believe that Christ is a perfect Saviour, not asking them to help him at the first, but able to begin with them just where they are, and to lift them up from all the hardness of their hearts and the blackness of their souls to the very gates of heaven. He is a perfect Saviour, soul, and a perfect Saviour for you. You know the old story of the brazen serpent.

There may have been some very wise persons who, when the brazen serpent was lifted up, would say "I cannot look there and be healed, for, you see, I do not feel the venom in my veins as my next door neighbour does." The man is bitten, and his veins are swelling, but he says he does not feel the pain so acutely as his neighbour, and he does not feel the joy of those who are healed, or else he would look. "If some angel would come," he says, "and tell me that the brazen serpent was set up on purpose for me, and that I am ordained to be healed by it, then I would look." There is a poor ignorant man over there who asks no questions but does just as he is told. Moses cries "Look, look, ye dying; look and live!" and, asking no questions about what he has felt, or what he was, or what he should feel, yonder poor soul just looks and the deed is done; the flush of health runs through him, and he is restored, while the questioner, the wise man in his own conceit, too wise indeed, to do as he is told, perishes through his own folly, a victim to the serpents, but yet more a victim to his own conceit. Christ is a perfect Saviour to begin with you, and he will also be a perfect Saviour to carry on the work. He will never want your help; he is a perfect Saviour to finish the work. He will bring you at last to his right-hand, and throned with him in light you shall bless and praise the name of God that He provided a perfect Saviour for men.

3. Once more, let me remind you *that Christ is a perfectly successful Saviour*. I mean by this that, in one sense, *he has already finished the work of salvation*. All that has to be done to save a soul Christ has done already. There is no more ransom to be paid; to the last drachma he hath counted down the price. There is no more righteousness to be wrought out; to the last stitch he has finished the garment. There is nothing to be done to reconcile God to sinners; he hath reconciled us unto God by his blood. There is nothing wanted to clear the way to the mercy-seat; we have a new and living way through the veil that was rent, even the body of Christ. There is no need of any preparation for our reception on the part of God. "It is finished," was the voice from Calvary; it meant what it said, "*It is* finished." Christ hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. And, as he has been successful in doing all the work for us, so, *in every case where that work has been applied, perfect success has followed*. Produce a single case where an application has been made to Christ without success. Find a single soul in whom Christ has commenced his work, and then left it. You do hear of some who fall from grace: produce them. We are told of some who are children of God to-day, and children of the devil to-morrow: produce them. We are told that whom once he loves he may leave; produce those whom he has ever left. Let them be seen. Hold them up to the gaze of men and devils—the patients in whom Christ's medicine did work awhile, but failed to produce a lasting cure. Heaven were clothed in sackcloth if such a discovery were made, for if he hath failed to keep on earth, why not in heaven? Hell were echoing with infernal laughter if one such instance were found, for where were the honour of God's word and promise? We challenge you, ye princes of darkness, and ye who make the vast assembly of the damned

in hell, we challenge you to produce in all your ranks a single case of one who trusted in Christ that he would deliver him and yet Christ cast him away; or one in whom the new spirit was infused and regeneration wrought, and who yet, after all fell and perished like the rest. Lift up your eyes to heaven; innumerable as the stars are the spirits redeemed by blood; so many as they are, they are all witnesses to the fact that Christ is a perfect Saviour; that he is no professor who does not perform, for he has carried them all there, and as we gaze upon them we can say, "Thou *hast* redeemed them unto God by thy blood;" thou canst save, and perfectly save, O Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I have thus dwelt upon the perfect adaptation, the perfect ability, and the perfect success of Christ, our text tells us *that it became him for whom are all things that he should give us such a Saviour.* "For whom are all things," says the Apostle; that is, all things are made for his glory. Now, it could not have been for God's glory to give us an imperfect Saviour; to send us one who would mock us with hopes which could not be fulfilled. It would have been a tantálising of human hope, which I do not hesitate to pronounce an awful cruelty, if any but a complete and perfect Saviour had been presented to us. If it had been partly works and partly grace, there had been no grace in it. If it had been needful for us to do something to make Christ's atonement efficacious, it would have been no atonement for us; we must have gone down to the pit of hell with this as an aggravation, that a God who professed to be a God of mercy had offered us a religion of which we could not avail ourselves; a hope which did but delude us, and make our darkness the blacker. I want to know what some of my brethren in the ministry, who preach such very high doctrine, do with their God's character. They are told to preach the gospel to every creature, but they very wisely do not do it, because they feel that the gospel they preach is not a gospel suitable to every creature; so they neglect their Master's mandate, and single out a few. I bless my Master that I have an available gospel, one that is available to you this morning, for "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" and I hold that it were inconsistent with the character of him "for whom are all things," and that it were derogatory to his honour if he should have sent to you a salvation that would not meet your case; if he should have sent me to preach a gospel to you which could not completely save. But, glory be to God, the salvation which is here preached, the salvation taught in this Book, brings all to you, and asks nothing from you.

Moreover, Paul calls our God—"*him by whom are all things.*" It would be inconsistent with the character of him by whom are all things if he had sent a part-Saviour; for us to do part ourselves, and for Christ to do the rest. Look at the sun. God wills for the sun to light the earth; doth he ask the earth's darkness to contribute to the light? Doth he question night, and ask it whether it has not in its sombre shades something which it may contribute to the brightness of noon? No, my brethren, up rises the sun in the morning, like a giant to run his race, and the earth is made bright. And shall God turn to the dark sinner, and ask him whether there is anything in him that may contribute to eternal light? No; up rises the face of Jesus, like

the Sun of Righteousness, with healing beneath his wings, and darkness is, at his coming, light. See ye, too, the showers. When the earth is thirsty and cracking, doth the Lord say unto the clouds, "Wait ye until the earth can help ye, and can minister unto its own fertility?" Nay, verily, but the wind bloweth and the clouds cover the sky, and upon the thirsty earth the refreshing showers come down. So is it with Christ; waiting not for man, and tarrying not for the Son of Man; asking nothing from us, he giveth us of his own rich grace, and is a complete and perfect Saviour.

Thus much, then, upon our first head; I would we had more time for our second; but we will pass to it at once.

II. CHRIST WAS MADE A PERFECT SAVIOUR THROUGH SUFFERING.

He was not made perfect in character by his suffering, for he always was perfect—perfect God, perfect man; but he was made officially perfect, perfect as the captain of our salvation through his sufferings, and that in four ways.

By his sufferings he became perfect as a Saviour *from having offered a complete expiation for sin.* Sin could not have been put away by holiness. The best performance of an unsuffering being could not have removed the guilt of man. Suffering was absolutely necessary, for suffering was the penalty of sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof," said God to Adam, "thou shalt surely die." Die then he must. Nothing short of death could meet the case. Christ must go to the cross; he must suffer there; ay, and he must bow his head and give up the ghost, or else no atonement for sin had been possible. The curse came upon us as the result of sin. "Curseth is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now had Christ been never so perfect, yet had he never suffered he never could have taken our curse. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on the tree," but without the tree, without the cross, Christ had not been our substitute, and all he did could have been of no sort of use to us. Being crucified he became accursed; being crucified he died, and thus he could make perfect expiation for sin. Sin demanded punishment; punishment must consist of loss and of pain; Christ lost everything, even to the stripping of his garment; his glory was taken from him; they made nothing of him; they spat in his face; they bowed the knee, and mocked him with bitter irony. There must be pain too, and he endured it; in his body there were the wounds and the fever which the wounds produced, and in his soul there was an exceeding heaviness even unto death, and an agony which no tongue can tell, for we have no words in which to speak of it. We believe that this agony was commensurate with the agonies of the lost in hell; not the same agony, but an equivalent for it; and remember, not the equivalent for the agony of one, but an equivalent for the hells of all that innumerable host whose sins he bore, condensed into one black draught to be drained in a few hours; the miseries of an eternity without an end, miseries caused by a God infinitely angry because of an awful rebellion, and these miseries multiplied by the millions for whom the man Christ Jesus stood as covenant head. What a draught was that, men and brethren! Well might it stagger even him! And yet he drained that cup, drained

it to its utmost dregs till not a drop was left. For thee, my soul, no flames of hell; for Christ the Paschal-lamb has been roasted in that fire. For thee, my soul, no torments of the damned, for Christ hath been condemned in thy stead. For thee, my spirit, no desertion of thy God, for He was forsaken of God for thee. 'Tis done, 'tis finished, and by thy sufferings, Jesus, thou hast become perfect as the expiation of thy people's sins. Do, my brethren, remember that your sins are perfectly expiated. Do not let them trouble you as to punishment; the punishment has gone. Sins cannot lie in two places at one time; they were put on Christ, and they cannot be on you. In fact, your sins are not to be found; the scapegoat has gone, and your sins will never be found again. Your sins, if they were searched for, could not be discovered, nor by the piercing eye of God can a single blemish be found in you. So far as the punishment of the law is concerned it is finished, and Christ is a perfect Saviour.

Again, if Christ had not suffered he could not have been perfect as a Saviour, *because he could not have brought in a perfect righteousness.* It is not enough to expiate sin. God requires of man perfect obedience. If man would be in heaven he must be perfectly obedient. Christ, as he took away our guilt, has supplied us with a matchless righteousness. His works are our works; his doings are, by imputation, our doings. But a part of obedience is a patient endurance of God's will. Patience is no mean part of the full obedience of a sincere soul. Christ must therefore suffer hunger, and cold, and nakedness throughout life, that he may be capable of the virtue of patience. An obedience even unto death is now the only perfect form of obedience. The man who would keep the law of God perfectly must not start back even at martyrdom. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," would now require death to consummate it. It was not possible for the Master to have made the robe, woven from the top throughout without seam, unless the scarlet thread of crucifixion had run along its edge. But now, my soul, Christ is thy perfect Saviour, for he presents thee with a perfect righteousness. There is nothing more to do. Neither my living nor my dying can make my righteousness more complete. No doing, no labouring, no denying, no suffering, are needed to finish that which Christ began. "It is finished." Put on thy robe, O Christian; walk ever in it; let it be thy wedding-dress. Angels admire thee; God himself accepts thee; coming into his wedding-feast he sees thee with this garment on, and he asks thee not how thou comest hither, but bids thee sit down and feast for ever, for thou art such as even He can keep company with in his glory.

Yet, thirdly, it was necessary that Christ should suffer to make him a perfect Saviour *so far as his sympathy goes.* After sin is washed away, and righteousness imputed, we yet want a friend, for we are in a land of troubles and of sorrows. Now, if Christ had not suffered he could not have been a faithful high-priest, made like unto his brethren. We should never have had that sweet text—"He was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin," if he had not suffered. But now he knows all shapes of suffering. It is not possible that even out of the thousands now in this house there should be one heart whose case Christ cannot meet.

Disease, sickness of body, poverty, need, friendlessness, hopelessness, desertion—he knows all these. You cannot cast human suffering into any shape that is new to Christ. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." If you feel a thorn in your foot, remember that it once pierced his head. If you have a trouble or a difficulty, you may see there the mark of his hands, for he has climbed that way before. The whole path of sorrow has his blood-bedabbled footsteps all along, for the Man of Sorrows has been there, and he can now have sympathy with you. "Yes," I hear one say, "but my sorrows are the result of sin." So were his; though not his own, yet the result of sin they were. "Yes," you say, "but I am slandered, and I cannot bear it." They called him a drunken man, and a wine-bibber. Why, when you once think of the sufferings of Christ, yours are not worth a thought. Like the small dust of a balance that may be blown away with the breath of an infant, such are our agonies and our trials when compared with his. Drink thy little cup; see what a cup he drained. The little vinegar and gall that fall to thy share thou mayest gladly receive, for these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared to the sufferings through which he passed.

Finally, upon this point; he thus became perfect *as our exemplar*. This, too, was necessary in bringing many sons unto glory, for we come to heaven by following the example of Christ, as well as by being washed in his blood. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" that holiness is best of all promoted by an investigation of Christ's character, and a studious imitation of all its points. Now had Christ not suffered he could not have been an example to us. We should have said, "Yes, yes, he may be an example to unsuffering angels, but not to men who have to tread the hot coals of the furnace." He could have afforded no example of patience if he had never suffered; he could never have taught us to forgive if he had never felt injuries; he could not have trained us to holy courage if he had never fought a battle; he could never have shown us the way to make tribulation work experience, and experience hope, if through tribulation he had not himself waded to his throne. We want not an example taken from princes to be applied to peasants. We need a poor man to be an example for the poor; we want a man who lives in private to teach us how to live in retirement; we want one who fears not the face of crowds to show us how to walk in our public ways. We want, if we would meet the case of fallen humanity, a man just like the Saviour, who passed through all the various phases of life, was in all companies, was shot at from all quarters, was tempted in all points like as we are, and this could not have been if he had been led in quiet ways along a path of joy. He must do business on the tempestuous deeps; his ship must rock, his anchor drag, the thick darkness and the lightnings must gather round him; they did so, and thus the captain of our salvation was made perfect *through suffering*, as an example for our imitation. I would that we might each of us know him in the efficacy of his blood, in the glory of his righteousness, in the sweetness of his sympathy, and in the perfection of his example, for then should we know him to the joy of our hearts for ever.

III. And now, lastly, our third point—CHRIST'S HAVING BEEN MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING WILL ENNOBLE THE WHOLE WORK OF GRACE.

"It became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory"—that is the great work—"to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." The whole thing will work for his glory. Oh, my brethren, how this will glorify God at the last, that Christ, the man, should have been perfect through suffering! How this will glorify him in the eyes of *devils!* Looking upwards from their beds of fire where they bite their iron bands in vain, how will they see the wisdom and power of God as more than a match for the wisdom and might of their leader! It was in man that they defeated God; in man God destroys them. They trampled on man's heel; man has broken their head. They took away from man the transient crown of his Eden-glory; man wears the unfading crown of immortality. Man, even man, sits upon the throne of Godhead, and that man crowned with light and glory everlasting was a man who did encounter Satan; who met him, too, on fair grounds; not a man shielded from pain; not a man who had an immunity from internal or external distress; but a man full of weakness, full of infirmity like other men, and yet, through God in alliance with his manhood, more than a conqueror, and now reigning for ever and ever. Milton, I think it is, supposes that this may have been the reason for Satan's first rebellion, because he could not bear that an inferior race should be lifted up to be set above himself on God's throne. Whether this be so or not, it must certainly be an aggravation to the misery of that proud arch-traitor, that now the man, the man, the man in whose image God was defeated, is heir of all things, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

How greatly will God be exalted that day *in the eyes of lost spirits.* Ah! ye that shall perish—God grant there may be none such here!—if you shall ever perish in hell, you will have to glorify God as you see Christ, who was made perfect through suffering, reigning there. You will not be able to say, "My damnation lies at God's door," for you will see in Christ a suitable Saviour. You will have to look up and say, "Yes, he who was preached to me on Sabbath-days was God; he could save me. He whom I was bidden to trust in was man, and could sympathise with me, but I would not come unto him that I might have life." In letters of fire ye shall see it written, "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not;" and even your moans and groans as ye suffer shall be but an utterance of this awful truth—"Great God, thou art just; nay, thou art doubly just; just, first, in damning me for sin; just, next, in trampling me under foot, because I trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God, and counted his covenant an unholy thing." Your weepings and wailings shall be but the deep bass of the awful praise which the whole universe, willingly or unwillingly, must give to him who has provided a perfect Saviour, and made him perfect through suffering.

Oh, my brethren, what delight and transport will seize *the minds of those who are redeemed!* How will God be glorified then! Why, every wound of Christ will cause an everlasting song. As we shall circle his throne, rejoicing, will not this be the very summit of all our

harmony—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." We must not say what God could do or could not do, but it does seem to me that by no process of creation could he have ever made such beings as we shall be when we are brought to heaven; for if he had made us perfect yet then we should have stood through our own holiness; or if he had forgiven us without an atonement then we should never have seen his justice, nor his amazing love. But in heaven we shall be creatures who feel that we have everything but deserve nothing; creatures that have been the objects of the most wonderful love, and therefore so mightly attached to our Lord that it would be impossible for a thousand Satans ever to lead us astray. Again. We shall be such servants as even the angels cannot be, for we shall feel under deeper obligation to God than even they. They are but created happy; we shall be redeemed by the blood of God's dear Son, and I am sure, brethren, day without night we shall circle God's throne rejoicing, having more happiness than the angels, for they do not know what evil is, but we shall have known it to the full, and yet shall be perfectly free from it. They do not know what pain is, but we shall have known pain, and grief, and death, and yet shall be immortal. They do not know what it is to fall, but we shall look down to the depths of hell and remember that these were our portion. Oh! how we will sing, how we will chant his praise, and this, I say again, shall be the highest note, that we owe all to that bright one, that Lamb in the midst of the throne. We will tell it over, and over, and over again, and find it an inexhaustible theme for melodious joy and song that he became man, that he sweat great drops of blood, that he died, that he rose again. While the angels are singing "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" we will bid them stop the song a moment, while we say, "He whom ye thus adore was once covered with bloody sweat." As we cast our crowns at his feet, we will say, "And he was once despised and rejected of men." Lifting up our eyes and saluting him as God over all, blessed for ever, we will remember the reed, the sponge, the vinegar, and the nails; and as we come to him and have fellowship with him, and he shall lead us beside the living fountains of water, we will remember the black brook of Kedron of which he drank, and the awful depths of the grave into which he descended. Amid all the splendours of heaven, we shall never forget the agony, and misery, and dishonour of earth; and even when they sing the loudest sonnets of God's love, and power, and grace, we will sing this after all, and before all, and above all, that Jesus the Son of God died for us, and this shall be our everlasting song—"He loved us and gave himself for us, and we have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

A Sermon for the Lancashire Distress,

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 9TH, 1862, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?"—Job xxx. 25.

IN endeavouring to justify the ways of God, Job's three friends came to the harsh conclusion that he would not have been so severely afflicted if he had not been a very great sinner. Among other accusations against the afflicted patriarch, Eliphaz the Temanite had the cruelty to lay this at his door, "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry." Such a slander we may describe as "speaking wickedly for God," for in his ignorance of the great laws of Providence towards the saints in this life, the Temanite had uttered falsehood in order to account for the divine procedure. God's own testimony of Job is that he was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil;" and certainly he could never have earned the character of "perfect" if he had been devoid of pity for the poor. Richly did the three miserable comforters deserve the burning rebuke of their slandered friend, "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace and it shall be your wisdom."

Job, in his great indignation at the shameful accusation of unkindness to the needy, pours forth the following very solemn imprecation—"If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." Thus vehemently making a tremendous appeal to heaven, he shakes off the slander into the fire as Paul shook the viper from his hand. I trust there are many present who, if the like charge

should be laid to their door, might as boldly deny it; not in the same form of imprecation, for that is forbidden to the Christian man, but with all the positiveness which can dwell in the "Yea, yea," "Nay, nay" of the followers of Jesus. I trust that many of you can in your measure use the language of the man of Uz, and say, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." In the two questions of my text Job claims something more than merely having helped the poor with gifts, he declares that he wept and grieved for them. His charity was of the heart. He considered their case; laid their sorrows to his own soul; and lent his eyes to weep and his heart to mourn. "Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" Human sympathy is the subject of our present meditation, and I shall labour to excite in you those emotions which are the genuine result of sympathy when it is truly felt. Practical sympathy is my aim; I trust your liberality, at the end of the sermon, will prove that I have hit the centre of my target.

Human sympathy, then, its *commendations*, its *hindrances*, its *sure fruits*, and its *special application to the case in hand this morning*.

I. HUMAN SYMPATHY, ITS COMMENDATIONS.

1. We may say of it, first, that even *nature* dictateth that man should feel a sympathy for his kind. Humanity, had it remained in its *unfallen estate* would have been one delightful household of brothers and sisters. If our first parents had never sinned, we should have been one unbroken family, the home of peace, the abode of love. The fact that "God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth" would then have been a realized and established truth; no nationalities would have divided, or personal interests separated us. Having one common Father, one loving God, one blissful Paradise, our lives would have been one long heaven on earth of sweetly intermingled peace, love, joy, fellowship, and purity. One can hardly indulge a conception of such a happy world without an intense regret that the fall has made it all a dream—yet let us dream a moment of a world without a soldier, without sword, or spear, or shield; a world without a prison, a magistrate, or a chain; a society in which none will wrong his fellow, but each is anxious for the well-being of all; a race needing no exhortation to virtue, for virtue is its very life; a land where love has knit all natures into unity and breathed one soul into a thousand bodies! Alas! for us, when Adam fell he not only violated his Maker's laws, but in the fall he broke the unity of the race, and now we are isolated particles of manhood, instead of being what we should have been, members of one body, moved by one and the same spirit. The dream may vanish but we lose not our argument, for even in fallen humanity there are some palpitations of the one heart, some signs of the "one blood." Flesh and blood are able to make the revelation that we were not made to live unto ourselves. Fallen and debased as man is, and this pulpit is not prone to flatter human nature, yet we cannot but recognise the generous feeling towards the poor and suffering which

exists in many an unregenerate heart. We have known men who have forgotten God, but who, nevertheless, do not forget the poor; who despise their Maker's laws, but yet have a heart that melts at a tale of woe. It were folly to dispute that some who deny the God that made them, have yet exhibited bowels of compassion to the poor and needy. When even publicans and harlots can exhibit sympathy, how much more should it burn in the Christian heart; *we* should do more than others or else we shall hear the Master say, "What thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same." Called with a nobler calling, let us exhibit as the result of our regenerate nature a loftier compassion for the suffering sons of men. Many interesting incidents have been recorded by naturalists of sympathy among animals; the "dumb driven cattle" of our pastures, and the dogs of our streets have manifested commiseration towards a suffering one of their own species; and we are less than men, we are worse than brute beasts if we can enjoy abundance without sharing our bread with the starving, if we can be wrapt in comfort and refuse a garment to the shivering poor, or rest in our ceiled houses and yield no shelter to the homeless wanderer. Brethren, if nature herself teaches you wherefore should I say more, ye are not unnatural, ye achieve already more than mere nature can demand; you do the greater, you will not fail in the less.

2. Further, we may remark that *the absence of sympathy has always been esteemed, in all countries, and in all ages, one of the most abominable of vices.* In old classic history who are the men held up to everlasting execration? Are they not those who had no mercy on the poor. Each land has its legend of the proud noble who hoarded up his corn in the day of famine, and bade the perishing multitudes curse and die; and down to this day the name of such a wretch is quoted as a word of infamy. A man without a heart would be a beast more worthy of being hunted down than a tiger or a wolf. Men with little hearts and grasping ungenerous spirits, how heartily are they despised! If they wear the Christian garb they disgrace it; the ordinary disciples of morality are ashamed of them, and I may add that even vice and immorality shun their company. The grinding, hardhearted man may gain the approbation of those who are like himself, and therefore applaud him for his prudence and discretion, but the big heart of the world has ever been sound enough on this matter to understand that there is no genuine virtue without liberality, and that one of the most damning of all vices which stamps a man as being thoroughly rotten at the core, is that vice of selfishness which make the wretch live and care only for his own personal aggrandizement, and offer only a stony heart to the woes of his fellows. Brethren, I entertain no fear that you will ever win the badge of infamy which hangs about the neck of churls.

3. But I have better arguments to use with you. Sympathy *is especially a Christian's duty.* Consider what the Christian is, and you will say that if every other man were selfish he should be disinterested; if there were nowhere else a heart that had sympathy for the needy there should be one found in every Christian breast. The Christian is a king; it becometh not a king to be meanly caring for himself. Was Alexander

ever more royal than when his troops were suffering from thirst, and a soldier offered him a bowl full of the precious liquid, he put it aside, and said it was not fitting for a king to drink while his subjects were thirsty, and that he would share their sorrow with them? O ye; whom God has made kings and princes, reign royally over your own selfishness, and act with the honourable liberality which becomes the seed royal of the universe. You are sent into the world to be saviours of others, but how shall you be so if you care only for yourselves? It is yours to be lights, and doth not a light consume itself while it scatters its rays into the thick darkness? Is it not your office and privilege to have it said of you as of your Master—"He saved others, himself he cannot save?" The Christian's sympathy should ever be of the widest character, because he serves a God of infinite love. When the precious stone of love is thrown by grace into the crystal pool of a renewed heart it stirs the transparent life-floods into ever widening circles of sympathy: the first ring has no very wide circumference; we love our own household; for he that careth not for his own household is worse than a heathen man and a publican: but mark the next concentric ring; we love the household of faith "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren:" look once more, for the ever-widening ring has reached the very limit of the lake, and included all men in its area, for "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for all men."

If any man shall think that we are not "born for the universe" and should narrow our souls, I can only say that I have not so learned Christ, and hope never to confine to a few the sympathy which I believe to be meant for mankind. To me, a follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthrophist by profession, and generous by force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help he pities still.

4. Beloved, *will you remember the blessed example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;* for this, surely, will teach you not to live for self. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." His heart is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love. In all our afflictions he is afflicted. Since the day when he became flesh of our flesh, he hath never hidden himself from our sufferings. Our glorious Head is moved with all the sorrows which distress the members. Crowned though he now be, he forgets not the thorns which once he wore; amid the splendours of his regal state in Paradise he is not unmindful of his children here below. Still is he persecuted when Saul persecutes the saints; still are his brethren as the apple of his eye, and very near his heart. If ye can find in Christ a grain of selfishness, consecrate yourselves unto your lusts, and let Mammon be your God. If ye can find in Christ a solitary atom of hardness of heart and callousness of spirit, then justify yourselves, ye whose hearts are as stones to the wailing of the desolate. But if ye profess to be followers of the Man of Nazareth, be ye full of compassion; he feeds the hungry lest they faint by the way; he bindeth up the broken in heart and healeth all their wounds; he heareth the cry of the needy

and precious shall their blood be in his sight; therefore be ye also tender-hearted and very affectionate the one toward the other.

5. Dear friends, though this last reason will certainly be to a Christian heart the very best that can be urged, yet permit me to suggest another. *Sympathy is essential to our usefulness.* I know that a man in the ministry who cannot feel, had much better resign his office. We have heard some hold forth the doctrines of grace, as if they were a nauseous medicine, and men were to be forced to drink thereof by hard words and violent abuse. We have always thought that such men did more hurt than good, for while seeking to vindicate the letter, they evidently missed the spirit of the faith once delivered unto the saints. Cold and impassive are some of our divines; they utter truth as though it were no concern of theirs whether men received it or no. To such men heaven and hell, death and eternity, are mere themes for oratory, but not subjects for emotion. The man who will do good must throw himself into his words; and put his whole being into intense communion with the truth which he utters. God's true minister cannot preach a sermon upon the ruin of man without feeling a deep amazement in his own spirit, because of the burden of the Lord. He cannot, on the other hand, unfold the joys of pardon and the love of Jesus without a leaping heart and rejoicing tongue. The man who is devoid of love will be devoid of power, for sympathies are golden chains by which Christian orators draw men's ears and hearts to themselves and the truths they teach. "I preached," said one, "when I spake of condemnation as though I wore the chains about my own arm, and heard them clanking in my ears." "And I," another might have said, "I preached of pardon bought with blood, as though I had myself just come up from the sacred fountain, having left my foulness all behind, and being girt about with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints." If our hearers perceive that we do not really long for their good, that our preaching is but a matter of mere routine to be got through as so much irksome "*duty*," can we hope to win their hearts? But when they feel that there is a loving heart within the preacher, then they give the more earnest heed to the things whereof we speak. You Sunday-school teachers, you must have warm hearts or you will be of little use to your children. You street-preachers, City missionaries, Bible women, and tract distributors, you who in any way seek to serve our Lord—a heart, a heart, a heart, a tender heart, a flaming heart, a heart saturated with intense sympathy, this, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will give you success in your endeavours. Name the men the wide world over who have been the most succesful in bending multitudes to their own will, and they are the men who have the largest hearts. For good or evil, heart-power is real power. The men whose hearts move with mighty pulsations like the piston-rod of a steam engine, will soon move the wheels and drag along the ponderous load. We must have within us the engine of the heart, throbbing mightily and continually, and then shall we draw the hearts of men with irresistible force.

6. Here I must supplement that thought with another; *sympathy may often be the direct means of conversion.* How do the Romanists craftily avail themselves of this! The loaves and fishes have always been used

at Rome as an attraction to the multitude. Still the Sister of Mercy, with her basket on her arm, goes to the poor, or devotes herself to the sick—and in this we praise them; were it the gospel they had to teach, they could scarcely have found a wiser method for its propagation; and be it what it may which they have to disseminate, they certainly have not failed for lack of wisdom. I would that we who have a purer faith, could remember a little more the intimate connection between the body and the soul. Go to the poor man and tell him of the bread of heaven, but first give him the bread of earth, for how shall he hear you with a starving body? Tell to him of the robe of Jesu's righteousness, but you will do it all the better when you have provided a garment with which he may cover his nakedness. It seems an idle tale to a poor man if you talk to him of spiritual things and cruelly refuse him help as to temporals. Sympathy, thus expressed, may be a mighty instrument for good; and even without this, if you be too poor to be able to carry out the pecuniary part of benevolence, a kind word, a look, a sentence or two of sympathy in trouble, a little loving advice, or an exhortation to your neighbour to cast his burden on the Lord, may do much spiritual service. I do not know, but I think if all our Church-members were full of love, and would always deal kindly, there would be very few hearts that would long hold out, at least from hearing the Word. You ask a person to hear your preacher; but he knows that you are crotchety, short-tempered, illiberal, and he is not likely to think much of the Word which, as he thinks, has made you what you are; but if, on the other hand, he sees your compassionate spirit, he will first be attracted to you, then next to what you have to say, and then you may lead him as with a thread, and bring him to listen to the truth as it is in Jesus, and who can tell but thus, through the sympathy of your tender heart, you may be the means of bringing him to Christ.

7. And I shall say here, that this sympathy *is sure to be a great blessing to yourselves.* If you want joy—joy that you may think upon at nights, and live upon day after day, next to the joy of the Lord, which is our strength, is the joy of doing good. The selfish man thinks that he has the most enjoyment in laying out his wealth upon himself. Poor fool! his interest is vastly small compared with the immense return which generosity, and liberality, and sympathy bring to the man who exercises them. Be ye assured that we can know as much joy in another's joy as in our own joy. Then, beside the joy it brings, there is experience. Experimental knowledge may be gained by it. I would not, of course, aver that a man can get experience without having trouble himself, but the next best thing to it, is to bear other people's troubles. We may never have known what it is to want bread, but to see a saint who has been brought to the door of starvation, and yet has had his bread given and his water sure, may be almost as useful. You and I may not be tortured with the pangs of sickness or the weakness of decay, but to climb some three pairs of stairs to a miserable back room, and to see a child of God patient in his tribulation, and to put ourselves by sympathy upon his bed, and suffer and smart with him, may give us the next best thing to the experience itself. I do think, brethren, that some men may live twenty lives, and get the experience of twenty men, and the infor-

mation and real good of twenty men's troubles, by having large hearts which can hold the sorrows of others. Oh! we cannot tell how much blessedness we might receive if we were more free to aid our fellows. "It *is* more blessed to give than to receive." Ask any man who has been to visit the sick, the poor, and the needy, whether he has not come home more resigned to his own trials, and more satisfied with his own lot. We gave a shilling, and received a casket of pearls, which dropped from the lips of the poor suffering-one while he told of God's faithfulness, and the preciousness of the love of Christ. We are great losers when we know not these rich poor saints. If we would but trade with them 'twere a blessed barter for us. Coral and pearl—let no mention be made of them in comparison with the priceless gems which we might receive if we had greater sympathy and fuller communion with the suffering sons and daughters of Jerusalem.

Thus have I said as much as may be fitting this morning in commendation of Christian sympathy.

II. We speak now of THE HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

Some say that there is very little Christian sympathy abroad. I do not believe them, except as regards themselves. I dare say they have measured other men's corn with their own bushels. When any say, "O, there is no love in the Church," I have always noticed that, without exception, they have no love themselves. On the other hand, we have heard others say, "What a blessed unity there is in the Church; when we come to the Tabernacle it does us good to get such hearty shakes of the hand, and to see such love in every brother's eye." When they speak thus, I know the reason is that they carry fire in their own hearts, and then they think the Church warm, while the others carry lumps of ice in their hearts, and then they imagine that everybody must be cold.

1. One of the great impediments to Christian sympathy is *our own intense selfishness*. We are all selfish by nature, and it is a work of grace to break this thoroughly down, until we live to Christ, and not to self any longer. How often is the rich man tempted to think that his riches are his own. A certain lady being accosted by a beggar, who asked charity of her; she gave him a shilling, saying, "Take that shilling; it is more than God ever gave me." The beggar said, "O, Madam, but God has given you all your abundance." "Nay," said she, "but I am right; God has only *lent* me what I have; all I have is a loan." I would that all who are entrusted with this world's substance felt that it was only loaned out to them, and that they were stewards. Now, a steward, when he has orders to give a poor man a large sum of money, does not say, "Dear me, that will make me poor!" He never considered that that which was entrusted to him belonged to him, and so he gives it freely enough. So, remember, you have nothing of your own; specially you Christian men, who have been bought with a price, you are in a double sense stewards unto God, and should act as such; living to God, we should devote ourselves to the good of the race for Jesus' sake.

2. Another hindrance lies *in the customs of our country*. We still have amongst us too much of caste and custom. The exclusiveness of rank is not readily overcome. It is not so, I thank God, in this place of

worship, but I have known many places of worship where there are tiers of Christian people, layer on layer, who never associate with each other. In some places of worship they put up in conspicuous letters, "FREE SEATS FOR THE POOR." I do abominate that! Then you have another class—respectable tradesmen, but though they sit at the same table with the dons, and my lord this or that, they never think for a moment of speaking to them. When people come out of Church, what a gradation there is! Have I not seen in many a country village how, first of all, the squire goes out, and then the bailiff follows, and then all the poor people curtsey and bow to shew their abject servitude and serfdom. And all this in a Christian land! In our Dissenting places of worship what stiffness there is; what rustling of the silks up one aisle, and what quietude of the cottons in another! When the members come together Lady So-and-so, who sits yonder, or Miss This, who sits there, will hardly recognise Nancy That, or Betsy So-and-so? Now I feel as much pleased in associating with the poorest of God's saints as with those who are of a higher degree in this world, for I believe the happy fusion of all will promote the interests of all. It would vex my heart to see you grow into the stuck-up respectability of some of our fine congregations. Away for ever with these castes and divisions; let us maintain the family feeling, and suffer nothing to violate it.

3. Much want of sympathy is produced by *our ignorance of one another*. We do not know the sufferings of our fellows. If I had brought the newspaper here to-day, and I had half a mind to do so, and had read you some extracts about the sufferings in Preston, and Wigan, and the various towns in Lancashire, you would have known much more about the distress than you do now. Or if, which would do as well, you were to go next Monday with some City missionary to the East end, or St. Giles's, or some poor district this side the water you would say, "Dear me, I did not know that people really did suffer at this rate; I had no idea of it; or I would have given more to the poor." We want to be educated into the knowlege of our national poverty; we want to be taught and trained, to know more of what our fellow-men can and do suffer. Oh! if the Christian Church knew the immorality of London, she would cry aloud to God. If but for one night you could see the harlotry and infamy; if you could but once see the rascality of London gathered into one mass, your hearts would melt with woe and bitterness, and you would bow yourselves before God and cry unto him for this city as one that mourneth for his only son, even for his firstborn.

4. No doubt *the abounding deception which exists among those who seek our help has checked much liberality*. I think I can tell the moment a man opens his mouth to address me, when a man wants to beg of me. There is such a particular whine and a sanctified unction, that the moment you hear it, you think, "I will give that man nothing; he is an old established beggar, and gets his living by it." Seeing, as I have done, not scores, but hundreds of these beings, there is a tendency to get one's heart hard and callous, and to say "Oh! they are all deceivers." But they are not all such; there is a vast amount of real distress of a private character, a suffering which will not cry nor moan; and I take it that it ought to be

your business and mine to seek out these cases; not to stop till they come to us, but to go to them, avoiding ever, with a stern discretion, those ill cases which do but prey upon Christian charity, but seeking out the genuine sufferers, and giving them relief. Let none of these things, great obstacles though they be, hinder your sympathy to-day, for none of them exist in the case which we shall have to plead this morning.

III. A few minutes upon THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

1. The fruit of Christian sympathy will be seen in *a kindly association with all Christians:* we shall not shun them nor pass them by.

2. It will be seen next, in a *kindly encouragement of those who want aid,* constantly being ready to give a word of good advice, and good cheer to the heart which is ready to faint. Dear Christian friends, I think our experience is not so available as it might be for the good of others. In the olden times they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard. You will find your brethren often distressed in mind; you have passed through the same stage; conversation with them will help them to escape as you have done. More especially is this conversation very valuable under the pangs of conviction. When a young man or woman has been awakened under the ministry, I charge you each before God, you that have found peace in Christ, to watch the throes and agonies of the new birth, and be at hand to take the little child and nurse it for Christ. The senior members of every Christian Church should consider themselves, as called by their very position to look after the young. We have some such here; we want a few more. We want you mothers in Israel, especially, to be so sympathetic that you may no sooner hear that a soul is in distress than you are in distress too till you can have poured in the oil and the wine into their wounds. I think this sympathy should be especially shown to any that backslide. There is a tendency to cut such off from the Church-book and then leave them. This should not be; we must look after that which is out of the way. The shepherd must leave the ninety and nine sheep to go after the one which has gone astray. If you see one vacillating be most careful there. If you detect in any a growing coldness, be the more anxious to foster that which remains, which is ready to die. Let a holy discipline and watchfulness be maintained over the entire Church, by the care and forethought of every one for his next friend. Thus can you practically show your Christian sympathy.

3. Show it, also, *whenever you hear the good name of any called into doubt.* Stand up for your brethren. 'Tis an ill bird that fouls its own nest, but there are some such birds. The moment they hear a word or a whisper against a Christian man, though a member of the same Church, "Report it, report it" say they; always pretending that they are very sorry, but all the while sucking it as a dainty morsel. The old proverb, you know, was, "We have done dinner; clear the things away, and now let us sit down and crack other men's characters." I fear me there are even some professing Christians who do that. This is not sympathy, but the malice of Satan: may God deliver you from it! Stand up for all that are your fellow-soldiers: be jealous of the honour of the regiment in which you have enlisted.

4. But still there is no Christian sympathy in all this if it does not when needed, *prove itself by real gifts of our substance.* Zealous words will not warm the cold; delicate words will not feed the hungry; the freest speech will not set free the captive, or visit him in prison; the most adorned words will not clothe the naked, and the words that are most full of unction will not pour oil and wine into the wounds of the sick. Words! Words! Words! Chaff! Chaff!! Chaff!!! If there be no act there is no sympathy. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Perhaps some of my hearers this morning will say that the text and the subject are appropriate to the occasion, but that they want some spiritual food. Well, you get that often, I trust, here; but I am persuaded that there are times when, if Christ were upon earth, he would dwell mainly upon these themes of practical Christianity. I read my Master's Sermon on the Mount, and what doctrine is there in it? It is all precept from beginning to end; and so shall my sermon be this morning; not doctrine, but precept; for this I know, we want to see in the Christian world more of the practical carrying out of the loving benevolence of the Saviour. What care I about the doctrines for which you fight, unless they produce in you the spirit of Christ? What care I for your forms of faith and your ceremonies, if all the while you are a Nabal, wickedly saying in your heart, "Shall I take my bread and my water to give it unto these strangers?" Oh! let your faith be a living faith, lest, while you have the form of godliness, you deny the power thereof. Time was when, wherever a man met a Christian he met a helper. "I shall starve!" said he, until he saw a Christian's face, and then he said, "Now shall I be aided." But some have thrown benevolence aside, and imagine that these are old duties of a legal character. Legal, then, will I be, when, in my Master's name again I say, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

IV. I now conclude with an appeal for the special object of the collection this morning. I ASK YOUR AID FOR THESE NEEDY ONES IN LANCASHIRE.

1. Remember, first, *that their poverty is no fault of their own.* They are not brought to it by excess of meats or drinks. They are not reduced to it by riot or disorder. It is not idleness; it is not a wilful strike against the masters. It is utterly unavoidable; and here, therefore, is the right place for benevolence to display itself. The Egyptian hieroglyph for charity is very suggestive. It is a naked child giving honey to a bee which has lost its wings. Notice, it is a child: we should give in meekness. It is a naked child: we should give from pure motives, and not for show. It is a child feeding a bee; not a drone, but one that will work; a bee that has lost its wings; one, therefore, which has lost its power to supply itself: a picture before you of those martyrs and confessors of industry whose cause I plead to-day. A bee that has lost its wings makes its appeal for a little honey to every childlike heart here to-day, and they who are true to God will not refuse it their aid.

2. Remember, too, *that the cause of this suffering is a national sin—the sin of slavery.* We have not yet passed the third generation, and upon a nation God visits sin to the third and fourth generation. We have rid ourselves, at last, of this accursed stain so far as our present Government is concerned; we are therefore delivered from any fear in future on that ground; but still, if slavery be now in America, we must remember that it would not have been there if it had not been carried there, and we are partners in guilt. Moreover, there has been too much winking at slavery amongst the merchants of Manchester and Liverpool. There has not been that abhorrence of the evil which should have been, and therefore it is just in the Providence of God that when America is cut with the sword we should be made to smart with the rod. If the Lord is pleased to smite our nation in one particular place, yet we must remember that it is meant for us all. Let us all bear the infliction as our tribulation, and let us cheerfully take up the burden, for it is but a little one compared with what our sins might have brought upon us. Better far for us to have famine than war. From all civil war and all the desperate wickedness which it involves, good Lord deliver us; and if thou smitest us as thou hast done, it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man.

3. I must also refresh your memories, though you know it well, *with the fact of the patient endurance of those who have been called to suffer.* You have read of no burning of mills, no breaking open of baker's shops. You have heard no accusations brought against the aristocracy; you have heard of no great political movement for the upsetting of our institutions. There was never upon earth a nobler spectacle than that of these men suffering so frightfully with their wives and children, and yet enduring it so patiently. They deserve to be helped. If ever there was a case in which human ears must be opened to hear the cry of woe, this is it.. If you and I had our wives and children at home starving, and had nothing but the charity of the parish and the little relief of the committees, making only some one-and-fourpence or one-and-sixpence a head to live upon for a week, I am afraid we should begin to think that we could re-adjust the machinery of Government; or it might happen that if we saw bread and could not get it we might break the window, or do some unrighteous act to take away another man's property sooner than see our children starve. They suffer well; they suffer well, brethren; and we do not well unless we help them.

4. Moreover, *remember how widely spread is this distress.* I know too many of my dear hearers are often brought to as great poverty as the operatives in Lancashire, but then you have some little help; sometimes the Church can give it; at other times some friend, not quite so badly off as you are, will help you. But there, if a poor man wants a loaf, he cannot get it of the tradesman even on credit, for the tradesman has no power to give him credit. Nor can these people borrow of their neighbours, for where all are equally destitute one cannot help another. Even the Churches fail to do what they would wish to do. In the case of one dear brother, late a student in our college, to whom we constantly send supplies week by week, and who maintains a class of some forty young women, and in answer to the cry of faith has found all the means, I

hope to aid him by this collection of to-day. The distress is not only with the poor now, but with those a little above them, and God only knoweth to what extent it must go unless in his gracious Providence he by some means or other, bringeth a supply of cotton that they may once again be at work.

5. Wherefore need I urge you, my hearers? I feel that you are ready now to assist these suffering ones. *Let your own gratitude to God move you.* Blessed be God that you have not this famine and straitness of bread. Thank the Master that though times may be hard, and some may now and then complain, yet we have not to walk through our streets and see our factories shut up, and miss the smoke which marks the daily toil that brings food to hungry mouths. We have not to know every habitation is a Bochim because the strong man boweth down for lack of bread, and the faces of the children are wan, and the mothers weep, and even the breasts refuse the infant child its needed nourishment. Give as God has prospered you. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord shall remember him in the time of trouble. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life freely given him; let him, therefore, freely give, even as he hath freely received.

[*The collections of the day amounted to the noble sum of* £720—*to God be glory! The amount will be reserved for a day or two, that readers of the sermons may unite in this deed of charity.*]

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A MESSAGE FROM GOD FOR THEE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 16TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins."—Lamentations iv, 22.

EVERY Sabbath we are insisting upon it that both the Law and the Gospel have a voice to universal manhood: the Law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway, and the Gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the Law and the Gospel have a special voice to certain characters; that the law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, that the Gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favoured persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice. While there are texts which are universal, and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are at the same time a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished, and whose sin is pardoned; or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom resteth the curse of God, and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right-hand of the Most High. I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind prophet of old, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings;" but I have also to say, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without." According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Our two messages we will *try to deliver in their order;* we shall then want your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—*Why the difference?* and then we will *press upon each character the force of the message,* that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. Our FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. "The punishment of

thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity."

1. We find, at the outset, *a joyous fact.* Read it with glistening eyes ye to whom it belongs—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion." In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in his anger had put them from him, felt his repentings kindle together, and considered that they had suffered enough; "For she hath received at the Lord's hand," said the prophet, "double for all her sin." Brethren, in our case we have not been punished at all, but yet the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity *is* accomplished. Remember that sin must be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without a punishment, ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if he had no love, and yet as intensely loving as if he had no justice. To gain a just view of the character of God you must perceive all his attributes as infinitely developed; justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin *must* be punished. This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—"The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "Sin must be punished" is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire; and, as the damned in hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes. Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the Gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated or foregone, or that justice has had a sop given it to close its mouth. The consolation is far more sure and effectual; say ye unto the daughter of Zion that "the punishment of her iniquity is *accomplished.*" Christ hath for his people borne all the punishment which they deserved; and now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." God is satisfied, and asks no more.

Sin deserved God's wrath; that wrath has spent itself on Christ. The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. "Stand thou aside!" said Jesus—"Stand thou aside, my spouse, my Church, and I will suffer in thy stead." Down dashed the drops of fire; the burning sleet swept terribly over his head, and beat upon his poor defenceless person, until the clouds had emptied out their awful burden, and not a drop was left. Beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it be again called forth, but it was annihilated, it spent itself entirely upon Christ. There is no more punishment for the believer, since Christ hath died for him. In his dying, our Lord has satisfied the divine vengeance even to the full. Then this, too, *must satisfy our conscience.* The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inexorable as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but crieth out for something more. Like the horse-leech it saith—"Give, give, give." Until you can offer to God

a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience a quietus. But now, O daughter of Zion, let thy conscience be at rest. Justice is satisfied; the law is not despised: it is honoured; it is established. God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that thy punishment is accomplished, thou mayest come with boldness unto him, for no guilt doth lie on thee. Thou art accepted in the Beloved; thy guilt was laid on him of old, and thou art now safe.

"In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With his spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Come thou boldly unto God, and rejoice thou in him.

Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight, how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of heaven and of earth wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder I see him in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labours for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for heaven. He sweats "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It is not the sweat of his brow only, but "All his head, his hair, his garments, bloody be." God is smiting him, and laying upon him the punishment of our iniquities. He rises, with his heart exceeding sorrowful even unto death. They hurry him to Pilate's judgment-seat. The God of heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed, and falsely accused before the tribunal of his recreant creature. He is taken by the soldiery to Gabbatha; they strip, they scourge him; clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from his back. They buffet him, and bruise him with their blows; as if his robe of blood were not enough, they throw about his shoulders an old cloak, and make him a mimic king. Little knew they that he was the King of kings. He gives his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair; he hides not his face from shame and spitting. Oh! what shall be said of thee, thou Son of man? In what words shall we describe thy grief? All ye that pass by behold and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto his sorrow that was done unto him! Oh God, thou hast broken him with a rod of iron; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over him. He looks, and there is none to help; he turns his eye around, and there is none to comfort him. But see, through the streets of Jerusalem he is hastened to his death; they nail him to the transverse wood; they dash it into the ground; they dislocate his bones; he is poured out like water; all his bones are out of joint; he is brought into the dust of death; agonies are piled on agonies; as in the classic fable the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to heaven, misery is piled on misery, what if I say hell on hell! but Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last he reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" was the sum total of all human misery; the gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence. And thus he dies! Say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. "It is finished!" Let the angels sing it; hymn it in the plains of

overturning, overturning in the sinner's heart till Christ comes in. After every hope has been broken down we are apt to build up another. "Peace, peace, where there is no peace," is the sinner's constant cry. Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner's confidences, till at last there is not one stone left upon another that is not thrown down; then the sinner yields himself a captive, and free grace leads him in triumph to the cross. Is this your case this morning, my dear hearer? If it be then, my sweet message is for you. "Go in peace, they sins which are many are all forgiven thee!"

Further still: this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of *deep humiliation.* Look at the tenth verse of the second chapter:—"The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads: they have girded themselves in sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not want to enlarge on these points, because we have not time; and, what is more, there is no necessity for doing so, for you that have been brought through them understand them; and some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, "There is my picture; as face answereth to face in a glass so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition." Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you, to you is this gracious message sent—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

Furthermore: it seems from the thirteenth verse that all her foes were let loose against her, and her *grief exceeded all bounds* and prevented all comparison:—"What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring. That trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—"There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it." Ye give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentence. Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all thine enemies, thine own heart, and all the devils in hell should conspire against thee, yet to thee, even to thee, thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

Not to keep you longer on this point let me take you on to another. In the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the same chapter you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to *constant prayer:*—"Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out thine heart like water before the

face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him,"—and so on. Thus the soul is brought to abide fast by the mercy-seat, and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer is not so much an act as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany I was about to call it—

> "Wealth and honour I disdain,
> Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain,
> These can never satisfy,
> *Give me Christ, or else I die.*"

Every verse ends with that intense desire—"Give me Christ or else I die." This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless; it falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—"Give me Christ or else *I die.*" "I can no denial take." Again, and again, and again, the sound of its moaning goeth up before the Lord God of Sabaoth; its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks to-day. (Lord! open the ear that it may hear!) "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction, if the law has ever had its perfect work in you, you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you, and when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you; lay hold on it by faith; feed on it, live on it, and rejoice.

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is *a precious promise.* "I will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thou art in captivity now, but it is the last thou shalt ever have. Thou art sorrowing on account of sin, and troubled even to despair; but thou *art* now forgiven—not thou *shalt* be, but thou *art;* all the wrath was laid on Christ; there is none remaining upon thee; thou art forgiven, and thy captivity is turned as the streams in the south. Let thy mouth be filled with laughter, and thy tongue with singing, for the Lord hath done great things for thee. These convictions of thine shall never return again in their present terror; only do thou cling to the Rock of Ages, and no wave shall bear thee back into the deeps. Thou shalt go through the wilderness but once; thou shalt pass through the Jordan of a Saviour's blood, and then thou shalt enter into Canaan and rest, for "we that have believed do enter into rest." And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for thee. All thy hell is past; Tophet burns not for thee, neither can the pit shut its mouth upon thee. All that thou deservest of the wrath of God, Christ hath endured, and there is not a drop remaining for thee. Come thou to the golden chalice into which God drained his wrath, and

look at the sparkling wine of love which filleth it. Ah, how changed from what it once was. 'Twas full, and foul, and black; each drop was Tophet, and the whole of it eternal misery. Christ drained it; to the very dregs he drained it; turning it upside down, he said, "It is finished!" and not a drop was left. Come thou, I say, to it, for it is not empty now; it is full again, but with what is it filled withal? 'Tis full to the brim and overflowing with love unsearchable, eternal, divine. Come thou and drink.

"Calv'ry's summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of grace;
Count the purple drops, and say,
Thus my sins were borne away.
Now no more his wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head;
Justice now demands no more,
He hath paid the dreadful score.
Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in the Saviour's blood,
Zion, O! how bless'd art thou,
Justified from all things now."

"I will take the cup of salvation, and will call on the name of the Lord." You may have troubles, but you will never have punishment; you may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath; you may go to the grave, but you shall never go to hell; you shall descend into the regions of the dead, but never into the regions of the damned; the Evil One may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head; you may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation. "He will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thy punishment is all accomplished on another. Thou art free to-day; come thou forth out from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, and brought out his people, and delivered them with his own right hand!

Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message; I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, A BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus saith the Lord unto thee—"I will visit thine iniquity." Unbeliever, thou who hast never felt thy need of Christ, and never fled to him, to thee he says, "I will visit thine iniquity." His justice tarries, but it is sure; his axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried; or if they be, they shall have a resurrection. Thy thoughts, thy words, thy deeds, shall all return in terror on thy head. Thou shalt begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On thy dying bed thy frail tenement shall creak, and thou shalt see the blazings of the furnace of fire through the rifts of thy crumbling cottage. When thou shalt lie a-dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of heaven stand about thy bed and summon thee to judgment. Thy cheek shall blanch, however brazen may now be thy brow. Then, strong man, thou shalt be bowed down, and thy loins shall be loosened, for when God dealeth with thee thou shalt feel his hand, even though thou wert girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then thou diest; thy death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Thy soul descends into the pit amongst

thy kindred, and thou beginnest to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied him. Then shall thine oaths be all fulfilled; then shall thy lustings and thy revellings come to thee in their true light. Then shalt thou hear ringing in thy conscience the echo of the divine sentence, "Thou deservest all this, for God gave thee warning when he said "I will surely visit thee for thine iniquity." Then shall the trumpet ring—"Awake! Awake! ye dead and come to judgment!" From sea and land they start to live again. Thy soul comes back to its body which was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the great white throne is lifted up on high; the righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain; and, now, hark ye! hark ye! to a voice more dread than thunder—"Bind them up in bundles to burn them!—the drunkard with the drunkard; the swearer with the swearer: the careless, the proud, the self-righteous, each with each, and cast them into the furnace of fire." It is done, and where art thou now, sinner? Dost thou say of me this morning—"I knew that thou would'st speak not good but evil unto me?" Another day thou shalt bless thy stern reprover! Call me not thine enemy; it is thy sin that is thine enemy. *I* make not hell; I do but warn thee of it with a brother's love. Thou diggest hell thyself; thou thyself fillest it; and the breath of thy sins shall fan the fire. "The Lord of Hosts *will* visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom." Hear it; hearken thou to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns thee. Beware, O careless soul, beware of forgetting God, lest he tear thee in pieces, and there be none to deliver thee. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to thee.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which are now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the twenty-first verse, that the daughter of Edom was *a mirthful one.* In irony and sarcasm the prophet says—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked." There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God; there is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state. You say from day to day, "How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety; and what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Pleasure is your life, your only thought. Ah! daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for thy fine linen; there are ashes for all thine ornaments; thine earrings shall give place to everlasting tears-drops, and all thy beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay! Weep, all ye that thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging Judge, for the day cometh when he shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! "Thus saith the Lord; say, a sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth?"

Edom, moreover dwelt *very carelessly*, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, "Who shall come hither to disturb the eagle's nest? The son of Esau dwelleth like an eagle in his eyrie, and he pounceth down upon his prey or ever his victim is aware? Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo! he dareth to look in the face of the sun, and he laugheth at the spear of the hunter; who shall bring him down?" Thus saith the Lord, "O daughter of Edom, I will visit thine iniquity." "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Ye proud men and women, ye say, "Will God deal with us? Will he treat us as common sinners? Even if he should, we will not care; fill high the bowl and let us drink, even though it be at Belshazzar's feast; we will drink, though there be damnation in the cup!" Thus speak ye, but thus saith the Lord, even as he said unto Moab—"I will bring down thy high looks; I will trample thee like straw is trodden for the dunghill, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

More than this; it appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and *merriment over the sorrows of others*. Do you not hear even the wise men say—"Ah! These drivelling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!" "Look," says one—"I am a man of the world; I know nothing of these women's fears and child-like tremblings; why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of hell and of judgment—do you believe it? No" says this man "I know nothing of your care; I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!" O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God liveth, the day shall come when thou shalt be trodden as ashes under the soles of our feet. Beware ye, for when the Avenger cometh forth a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at, and called an old hypocrite for talking of God's destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark, and what think ye now of the prophet, what think ye now of the preacher of righteousness? Ye are swept away; the waves have covered you; a few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills, but the all-devouring waters reach you there. I hear your last shriek of awful anguish; there is not a single note of unbelief in it now; as you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the prophet was right and you were fools. To your death-beds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt to day; I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help thee! God help thee to repent! but heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is thy curse; God will visit thine iniquity upon thee!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain, a self-sufficient confidence. "Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build,

but I will throw down; and they shall call them, the border of wickedness, and, the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." So there are some of you who say, "I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges; I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment yet I pluck up heart again." Ah! daughter of Edom, God will visit thee for thine iniquity, and thy vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame.

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the forty-ninth chapter and the sixteenth verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last; and so also all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves foul at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings, and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins.

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, "*I will discover thy sins.*" Let every sinner here be afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin; He will discover it. It may be it was last night; 'twas in a very secret place, and you contrived so that none might track you; but the All-seeing One will discover your sin. "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbours, but if those neighbours did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are rent, your masks are plucked away; the Revealer of Secrets cometh forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published in the house-tops. The day cometh when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." This is thy portion, daughter of Edom! Thy secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit thee!

III. The time expires, but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES?

The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was *sovereign grace.* The daughter of Zion had no right to pardon; she had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her, and had entered into covenant with Abraham concerning her, that he would not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in his sovereignity, because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, he sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignity, but the line of justice; he sent it *because the daughter of Edom deserved it.* Sinner, when God says he will punish sin, thou mayest kick against it if thou wilt, but thy conscience tells thee thou deservest to be punished. God will not smite thee more than thou deservest, but let him only give thee as much, and wrath will come upon thee to the uttermost. Edom hath waxed proud; she hath been careless; she hath despised God; she is unbelieving; she repenteth not; therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it; it is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The scullions of Zion's household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him. We did think at first that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn; ridicule is the only answer they deserve; let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We believe still, and I hope that ever in this Christian land, and from this pulpit, I may always say that we believe this Book to be the Word of God. Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it. You said, as I read the description just now, "That is my case." Very well, then, the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, "I will try and believe it," but believe it. Do not say, "I hope it is true;" *it is true;* believe it, and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in thy spirit, "My punishment was borne by Christ; I shall never be carried into captivity any more; being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I am accepted, I am forgiven." Praise him every day now that his anger has passed away for ever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Does anybody object to that quotation? Object to Solomon and not to me; I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days.

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God's Word, and it is true. Believe it. "Oh," says one, "but if I believed it, I should be full of awful anguish." Would to God you were; for do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the law sent for? To flog men to hell? No, but to be our pedagogue to bring us to Christ. The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows, that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a pedagogue who with a stick, went round to the parents' houses and whipped the boys to school. Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though he is a good and tender Master, that he employs the law to go round to our houses to whip us to himself, his peace, his great salvation. Ah! I would I could drive you to the Saviour, for these thunders of to-day are meant to bring you from under the law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, thy doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure. Oh that thou wouldest but believe this, and that thy heart were broken, for then we might come to thee again, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins."

May God bless the words of this morning, and unto his name be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 23RD, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Corinthians vii. 29—31.

HOLY Scripture seldom gives a special rule for each particular case, but it rather instructeth us by general principles applicable to all cases. To meet every distinct moral emergency which could possibly arise, and solve every separate problem of action, would require rather a library than a volume. To men who are taught of the Spirit of God, general principles are far more valuable than special precepts, and I am half persuaded that it is so with all persons; for it is less difficult to apply a general principle to a peculiar case than it is to find out exactly what the particular case may be, and what the special rule applicable to it. In writing to the Church at Corinth the apostle had to answer several questions with regard to marriage; whether, for instance, it was not better in those persecuting times, when men often had to flee suddenly from their houses, that they should remain unmarried; whether, again, supposing a person became a Christian after marriage, it was lawful for him to separate from the person with whom he was unequally yoked; and several other questions as to fitting action in certain extraordinary positions. To these the apostle answers with an "I suppose," or again, "Howbeit, for this speak I, not the Lord;" as if he felt himself quite out of his element in attempting to meet every case; but soon he lands on sure ground in the verses before us, and seems to say, "Whatever may be the answers which I ought to give to these special questions, of this one thing I am quite sure; I say positively and without any doubt that the time is short, and therefore it remaineth, whether ye are married or not, whether ye weep or whether ye rejoice, whether ye buy or whether ye sell, that ye should act in all these things as knowing their temporary and unsubstantial character."

Dear brethren, the important lesson which we endeavour to teach this morning is just this—that because time is so short, and the things of this world so frail and fleeting, it becomes us always to look at

the things which are seen in their true character, and never to build substantial hopes on unsubstantial comforts, nor seek for solid joy from unreal things.

In order that I may make this matter very plain, and may be the more likely to enlist your attention, and to secure the friendship of your memories in future years, I intend this morning to *take you to a play.* Strange thing for me to do, who have never crossed the threshold of a theatre on any occasion, good or bad! Yet this morning I shall seat you in front of the stage, and I shall *put the worldling side by side with you while the five acts are performed.* I shall next invite you to attend *in the character of a Christian, to look through the whole and discern its emptiness;* then, in the third place, I shall *point you to the curtain which is quite sure to drop upon the scene;* and then we will walk out of this theatre of unreal show, this fashion of this world which passeth away, and *see what there is to do in this world which is real, practical, and lasting.*

Do not suppose that the idea of taking you to a theatre this morning is original on my part; it is in my text. "The fashion of this world passeth away,"—the word translated "fashion" is borrowed from the changing scenes of the drama; where the splendid pageantry vanishes as the scene changes. Nor will you think Holy Scripture too severe in its comparison, when I remind you that one of the world's own poets has said

> "All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players."

Nor will the most precise among you complain of the levity of a metaphor which is sanctioned by Apostolic use; but I trust you will all cheerfully listen, while in simple words I tell the story which the bard of the sanctuary has sung in flowing verse.

> "This life's a dream, *an empty show;*
> But the bright world to which I go,
> Hath joys substantial and sincere:
> When shall I wake and find me there?"

I. WE WILL WITNESS "THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD" AS IT PASSES BEFORE US, LISTENING TO THE WORLDLING'S COMMENT.

The *first act* introduces *those that have wives.* It opens with a *wedding.* The bride and bridegroom advance to the altar in bridal attire. The bells are ringing; crowds are cheering at the door, while overflowing mirth is supreme within. In another scene we observe domestic happiness and prosperity, a loving husband and a happy wife. Yet, further on in the performance, rosy children are climbing the father's knee; the little prattlers are lisping their mother's name. "Now," says our companion as he gazes with rapture, "This is real and enduring, I know it is; this will satisfy me; I crave for nothing more than this. *Home* is a word as sweet as heaven, and a healthy happy race of children is as fine a possession as even angels can desire. On this rock will I build all my hope; secure me this portion, and I cheerfully renounce the dreamy joys of religion." We whisper in his ear that all this is but a changing scene, and will by-and-bye pass

away, for time is short, and wife and children are dying creatures. The man laughs at us, and says, "Fanatics and enthusiasts may seek eternal joys, but these are enough for me." He believes that if there be anything permanent in the universe it is marrying and being given in marriage, educating and bringing up a family, and seeing them all comfortably settled. He is right in valuing the blessing, but wrong in making it his *all*. Will he see his error before the curtain falls? Or will he continue to found the hopes of an immortal spirit upon dying joys? See the green mounds in the cemetery, and the headstone, with "Here he lies." Alas for thee, poor deluded worldling, where is thy soul now? Doth it console thee that the dust of thine offspring shall mingle with thine ashes? Where hast thou now a home? What family hast thou now to care for? The first act is over; take breath and say, "This also is vanity."

The tenour of the drama changes, alas, how soon! Household joys are linked with household sorrows. *They that weep* are now before us in the *second act*. The cloudy and dark days have come. There are parents wringing their hands; a beloved child has died, and they are following its corpse to the tomb. Anon, the merchant has suffered a tremendous loss; he puts his hand to his aching head and mourns, for he knows not what will be the end of his troubles. The wife is smitten by the hand of death; she lies on her bed, blanched with sickness and wan with pain; there is a weeping husband at her side, and then there is another funeral, and in the dim distance I see the black horses again and again. The woes of men are frequent, and sorrow's visits are not, like those of angels, few and far between. Our man of the world, who is much moved at this second act, foreseeing his own sorrows therein, weeps, until he fairly sobs out his feelings, clutches us with earnestness, and cries, "Surely this is awfully real; you cannot call this a fleeting sorrow or a light affliction. I will wring my hands for ever; the delight of my eyes has been taken from me; I have lost all my joys now; my beloved in whom I trusted has withered like a leaf in autumn before my face; now shall I despair; I shall never look up again!" "I have lost my fortune," says the afflicted merchant, "and distress overwhelms me; this world is indeed a wilderness to me; all its flowers are withered. I would not give a snap of my finger to live now, for everything worth living for is gone!" Sympathising deeply with our friend, we nevertheless venture to tell him that these trials to the Christian, because they are so short and produce such lasting good, are not killing sorrows. "Ah," says he, "you men of faith may talk in that way, but I cannot; I tell you these are real things." Like an English sailor, who, seeing a play, sprung upon the stage to help a lady in distress, believing that the whole was real, so do such men weep and sigh, as if they were to mourn for ever, because some earthly good has been removed. Oh that they knew that the depths of sorrow were never yet explored by a mortal mourner! Oh that they would escape from those lower deeps where immortal spirits weep and wail amidst an emphasis of misery! The sorrows of time are trifles indeed when compared with the pains of everlasting punishment; and on the other hand *we* reckon that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

They are but light afflictions, which are but for a moment, a mere pin's prick to the man of faith. Happy is the man whose eyes are opened to see that heirs of heaven sorrow not as those who are without hope. A real joy of heavenly origin is ever with believers, and it is but the shadow of sorrow which falls upon them. There let the curtain drop—let us enter into an eternal state, and what and where are these temporary griefs?

But the *third act* comes on, and presents us with a view of *those who rejoice.* It may be that the first-born son has come of age, and there are great festivities. They are eating and drinking in the servants' hall, and in the master's banquet chamber; there are high notes of joy, and many compliments, and the smiling sire is as glad as man can be. Or it is the daughter's wedding, and kind friends implore a thousand blessings on her head, and the father smiles and shares the joy. Or it is a gain in business, a fortunate speculation; or the profits of industry have come flowing in, slowly perhaps, but still surely, and the man is full of rejoicing; he has a house, and home, and friends, and reputation, and honour, and he is, in the eyes of all who know him, happy; those who do not know him, think he has no cares, that he can have no sorrows, that his life must be one perpetual feast, and that, surely there can be no spot in his sun, no winter in his year, no ebb to follow his floods. Our friend by our side is smiling at this sunny picture. "There," says he, "is not that real? Why, there must be something in that! What more do you want? Only let me get the same, and I will leave you the joys of faith, and heaven, and immortality, to yourselves; these are the things for me; only let me laugh and make merry, and you may pray as you will. Fill high the bowl for me; put the roast and the viands on the table, and let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die." If we gently hint to our friend that all this passes away like a vision of the night, and that we have learned to look on it as though it were not, he laughs us to scorn, and accounts us mad when he is most mad himself. As for ourselves, so far from resting upon the softest couch that earth can give us, we spurn its vain delights.

> "There's nothing round this spacious earth
> That suits my large desire;
> To boundless joy and solid mirth
> My nobler thoughts aspire.
>
> Where pleasure rolls its living flood,
> From sin and dross refined;
> Still springing from the throne of God,
> And fit to cheer the mind."

But the *fourth act* of the drama is before us, and *they that buy* demand our attention. The merchant is neither a mourner nor a man of mirth; in the eyes of certain Mammonites he is attending to the one thing needful, the most substantial of all concerns. Here feast your eyes, ye hard, practical, earth-scrapers. There are his money-bags; hear how they thump on the table! There are the rolls of bonds, the banker's books, the title-deeds of estates, mortgages and securities, and the solid investment in his country's own consols. He has made a good thing of life, and still

he adheres to business, as he should do; and, like a painstaking man, he is accumulating still and piling up his heap, meanwhile adding field to field and estate to estate, till soon he will possess a whole county. He has just now been buying a large and very fine house, where he intends to spend the remainder of his days, for he is about to retire from business; the lawyer is busy making out the transfer; the sum of money is waiting to be paid, and the whole thing is as good as settled. "Ah! now," says our friend, who is looking on at the play, "you are not going to tell me that this is all a shadow? It is not; there is something very solid and real here, at least, something that will perfectly satisfy me." We tell him we dare say there is something that will satisfy *him*, but *our* desires are of a larger span, and nothing but the infinite can fill them. Alas for the man who can find satisfaction in earthly things! It will be only for a time; for when he comes to lie upon his dying-bed, he will find his buyings and his sellings poor things wherewithal to stuff a dying pillow; he will find that his gainings and his acquisitions bring but little comfort to an aching heart, and no peace to a conscience exercised with the fear of the wrath to come. "Ah, ah!" he cries, and sneers sarcastically, putting us aside as only fit for Bedlam, "Let me trade and make a fortune, and that is enough for me; with that I shall be well content!" Alas, poor fool, the snow melts not sooner than the joy of wealth, and the smoke of the chimney is as solid as the comfort of riches.

But we must not miss the *fifth act*. See the rich man, our friend whom lately we saw married, whom we then saw in trouble, afterwards rejoicing and then prospering in business, has entered upon a green old age; he has retired, and *has now come to use the world*. You will notice that in my text this is the last act of the drama. The world says he has been a wise man and has done well, for all men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself. Now he keeps a liberal table, a fine garden, excellent horses, and many servants; he has all the comforts in fact that wealth can command, and as you look around his noble park, as you gaze at his avenue of fine old trees, or stay a day or two at the family mansion and notice all its luxuries, you hear your friend saying, "Ay, there is something very real here; what do you think of this?" When we hint that the grey hairs of the owner of all these riches betoken that his time is short, and that if this be all he has he is a very poor man, for he will soon have to leave it, and that his regrets in leaving will make his death more pitiable than that of a pauper, our friend replies, "Ah! ah! you are always talking in this way. I tell you this is not a play. I believe it is all real and substantial, and I am not, by any talking of yours, to be made to think that it is unsubstantial and will soon be gone." O world, thou hast fine actors, to cheat men so well, or else mortal man is an easy fool, taken in thy net like the fishes of the sea. The whole matter is most palpably a mere show, but yet men give their souls to win it. Wherefore, O sons of men, are ye thus beside yourselves? "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

Dear friends, I have put before your mind's eye a fair picture of that which men who live by sight and not by faith regard as being

the chief end of man, and the real object of his being. It is to be married; to pass through the trials and joys of life with decency, to trade and grow rich, and at last to use the comforts of this world without abuse: a very comfortable and quiet picture, by no means the representation we should have to present before you of the profligate, the profane, the dissolute, or the debauched. There is nothing here but what is proper and right, and yet everything is improper and everything becomes wrong at once if these be thought to be the substantial things for which an immortal spirit is to spend its fires, and for which an undying soul is to exhaust its powers.

II. Let us now take the CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THIS DRAMA.

"Life *is* real; life is earnest:" it is real thus far to the Christian, it is real for work and activity for God; it is real in the solemn responsibility which it brings; it is real in the gratitude which we owe to God for the comforts which he is pleased to bestow; it is real to us so far as we can see God therein, and can turn everything to God's glory. The unreality of this world to a Christian, is found in the fact that *time is short*. This is the wand which touches the substance and makes it, before the eye of wisdom, dissolve into a shade. Time is short!

When the apostle declares that *they that have wives*, should be as though they had none, he does not teach us to despise the marriage state, but not to seek our heaven in it, nor let it hinder our serving the Lord. It is supposed that there are some things which a man without a wife and family can do—those things the man with a wife and family should do. It is supposed that a man without a wife can give his time to the cause of God: the man with a wife should do the same, and he will not find it difficult to do so if God hath blessed him with one who will second all his holy endeavours. It is supposed that a man without a wife has no care: a man with a wife should have none, for he should cast all his cares on God who careth for him. "He that careth not for his own house is worse than a heathen man and a publican;" and yet the apostle says, in the verse following my text, "But I would have you without carefulness;" for we should learn to live by faith. The man who has a large family, and many things to exercise his mind, should yet, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, live as quietly and comfortably as though he had none, depending and resting by simple faith upon the providence and goodness of God. Then, again, it is supposed that an unmarried man will find it easier to die, for there will be none of that sorrow at leaving his beloved family: the man with a wife and family *should*, by faith, find it just as easy since the promise runs, "Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me." Full of the same faithful tenderness and affection which another husband would exhibit, and even excelling in love and kindness, yet the Christian should look up to the divine Lord who is the husband of the widow, and with confidence leave his offspring, and bid them trust in his God. May God the Holy Ghost teach us how to walk in our households, loving ever and yet remembering that all our kindred shall pass away.

Again, there is the second act—*weeping*. Every Christian man must weep; but the Apostle says that our sorrows are to be regarded by us, because time is short, *as though they were no sorrows at all*. A man

who knows that his trials will not last long, can be cheerful under them. If he sees a Father's hand in the midst of every adversity, and believes that when he is tried he shall come forth like gold from the furnace; if he knows with the Psalmist that "weeping may endure for the night, but that joy cometh in the morning," why then grief has lost its weight, and sorrow has lost its sting; and while the man weeps he yet rejoices, seeing the rainbow of the covenant painted on the cloud. Happy man, who, under bereavement, under crosses, and losses, can still cast his burden upon God, and can say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" The Christian man is bound to live above his sorrows; he weeps, for "Jesus wept;" he may mourn, for the faithful have been mourners often, but he must not so mourn and weep as to be eaten up with grief; over the tops of the rolling waves he must see the haven of peace, and rejoice evermore.

So is it in the third part. The Christian has his *rejoicings*, and he is not forbidden to be happy; indeed, he is commanded to rejoice; and the things of this life he may freely enjoy with the double zest of the mercy itself, and of the God who gave it to him. But still, believer, in all thy joys, *remember to hold them with a loose hand.* Never so hold thy joys as if they were all in all to thee. Though it be wife, or child, or property, or health, or wealth, or fame, still ever stand ready to surrender all into thy Father's hand, feeling that these, after all, are not thy joys; that thou hast better springs to drink from than those which earth's summers can dry up, and that thou hast rivers of pleasure deeper and broader than any which earth's winter shall be able to freeze. Do thou still stand steadily to this, that, as earth cannot cast thee down to despair, so it cannot lift thee up so as to make thee forget thy God. Learn in these things to rejoice as though thou hadst them not, and let this be thy solace, that thy name is written in heaven.

So, too, in the matter of *buying and possessing.* It is not wrong for a Christian to trade and to trade well. I cannot see any reason why a Christian should be a fool; in fact, those who are fools in business are very often a great dishonour to the Christian religion, for a fool is very often first-cousin, if not father, to a knave. But, still, while we buy and sell it should always be thus—"This is not my real trade; this is not the way in which I really get rich, for my treasure is beyond the skies, where moth devours not, and where rust cannot consume." Handle these things, brethren, knowing that they take to themselves wings and flee away; look at them as transient objects which are to be used and sanctified in the passing, not your own, but lent to you for a time; to be repaid at last, with interest, in the day when the Master saith, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." A man may be as rich as Cresus, and his wealth will never hurt him if he does not hold it with a tight hand; and a man may be as happy as happiness can make him here, and yet it will not hurt him if he learns to keep it under his feet. But oh! when one's rejoicings or possessions

get the upper hand of us there is as dreadful a drowning in a sea of pleasure as in a sea of misery. Keep before your mind the words of our sweet singer—

"To thee we owe our wealth and friends,
And health, and safe abode;
Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
But they are not my God.

What empty things are all the skies,
And this inferior clod!
There's nothing here deserves my joys,
There's nothing like my God."

The last scene *is the using of the things of this life.* The creatures of God are given us to be used. John the Baptist may be an ascetic, but the Son of Man is come eating and drinking. The Christian man knows that the mercies which God has given him are to be used, but while he uses them *he must use them as though he did not use them.* That is a high philosophy which I fear me not many of us have learned, the philosophy of the apostle when he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." That man is the fullgrown and true Christian whom circumstances cannot alter! He trusts in God when he is penniless, and he trusts in his God just the same when he is rich; he rests on God when he can enjoy nothing, and he rests on him just the same when he can enjoy everything; he learned to build on the Rock of Ages when he had no comfort, and he builds on the Rock of Ages now, when he has every comfort! This, I take it, is where the apostle would have us brought. To the true Christian the things of this world are only real so far as they involve responsibility; but, seeing that time is short, he looks on life as men look upon a play; he sees a monarch strut, and he says, "Ah! he is to pull off his robes behind the stage!" He sees a peasant or a beggar, and he smiles and thinks of the time when the king and the peasant shall be equal, and the servant and his lord shall stand before one tribunal to give an account of the things done in the body. Send your souls longing after real and unchanging joys, for these splendid, gaudy, shifting scenes, mock the beholder and delude his hopes. Gorgeous as the colours of the bubble, and quite as frail, farewell ye worthless things, our spirit leaves you for eternal mansions in the skies.

III. And now, dear friends, I want your attention a few minutes while I point you to THE CURTAIN WHICH IS SOON TO DROP UPON ALL THESE THINGS, it bears this short device, "TIME IS SHORT."

It is very difficult to keep men in mind of the fact that they are mortal. We confess that we are mortal, but we profess by our actions that we are immortal. Said a man of eighty-two concerning another of seventy, when he wanted to buy his land and could not get it at the price he wished—"Never mind, So-and-so is an old man, he will soon be dead, and then I'll buy it." Though he was ten or twelve years older than the other, yet the other must of course, soon die, while he, in his own thoughts, must live for many a year. How short time is! Do we not, dear friends, get more and more that impression? I am but young compared with very many of you, yet the impression

constantly grows upon my mind. Why, it seems but the day before yesterday when I plucked the first early primrose of spring, while the flowers were breaking up from under the earth, and the buds were ready to burst from the sheath! It was only as yesterday that we were walking in the fields and were remarking that the corn was just beginning to be tinged with the golden hue of harvest! Only a few Sabbaths ago I was talking to you of Ruth in the harvest-fields, and of the heavily-laden waggon that was pressed down with sheaves; and now the leaves are almost all gone; but few remain upon the trees; these frosty nights and strong winds have swept the giants of the forest till their limbs are bare, and the hoar frosts plate them with silver. Then, before we shall have time to burn the winter's log, we shall see the snow-drops and the yellow crocus heralding another spring! At what a rate we whirl along! Childhood seems to travel in a waggon, but manhood at express-speed. As we grow older I am told that the speed increases till the grey-headed old man looks back upon all his life as being but a day; and I suppose, if we could live to be a hundred-and-thirty we should feel the same, till, like Jacob, we should say, "Few and evil have been the days of thy servant!" and, if we could live as long as Methuselah, I doubt not our life would appear shorter still. How time flies, not only by the measurement of the seasons, but by *ourselves!* A few days ago I trudged with my satchel on my back to school, or joined in boyish sport. How lately was it when the boy became a youth, and must be doing something, and was teaching other boys as he had been taught in his day. It was but yesterday I came to Park Street to address some few of you, and yet how time has fled since then, till now some nine years of our ministry have passed. No weaver's shuttle, no arrow from a bow, no swift post, no meteor seems to fly at a rate so wonderful as does our life! We heard of one the other day who had seen Wesley preach, and so we find ourselves side-by-side with the last century, and those old people have known some others in their youth who told them of the yet older time, and you find that going through the history of some ten or twelve persons you are carried back to the days of William the Conqueror, and you see our country taken by the Normans, and then you fly back to ancient British times as with a thought. You no longer say, "How long the nation has existed!" for it is as a sleep. You stand by some old cliff and see a deposit of shells, and as you remember that it may have taken a million of years to have formed that bed, you think—"What is man? and what is time? It is not here, but gone!" We have only to think of what time is to conclude at once that time is not! It is but a little interlude in the midst of the vast eternity; a narrow neck of land jutting out into the great, dread, and unfathomable sea of everlastingness!

But while time is thus short, *its end is absolutely sure.* That curtain yonder must fall soon! *It must fall;* it is inevitable. I cannot prevent my death by the most regular habits of life; the most skilful physician cannot preserve my life for me; a host of angels, should they swear to make me immortal, could not! When the time comes, die I must! And, as my death is inevitable, so it may be *very near.* Let each man remember that! How soon it may be we cannot tell!

Every Sabbath there are some in this house who are dead before the next Sabbath. I am not now venturing a guess; it is a matter of fact, a matter of fact, too, that comes under my own cognizance very frequently. According to our population and the gradual number of deaths, there must be some out of this congregation here this morning who will have gone the way of all flesh before next Sabbath-day! There was one—I look at her seat now, and a brother sitting near by looks there with sorrow!—who was with us one Sabbath-day, and we soon heard that she had gone to enjoy the Eternal Sabbath! At a Church-meeting last week, no less than three of our sisters were reported as having fallen asleep in Jesus within a week. Ah! how near is death to us! Perhaps he now stands looking over thy shoulder, young man; God holds back his hand, but the dart of death is close to thy heart, and soon,—ah, how soon!—may you be taken to the place appointed for all living! Go, thou strong man, and remember that thou art a mass of feebleness! Go, thou young man, and remember that death reaps green corn! Go, thou old man, and expect the sickle! And go, thou rich man, and remember that thou shalt soon leave everything that thou hast, and then where art thou if thou hast no treasure in heaven, if thou hast not laid up in store for immortality?

And I must add here that, to those who have no God, death, while inevitable and very near, *will be most awful and tremendous!* There was a dreadful story told in the papers of this last week. At the sea-port town of Garliestown one day last week, certain workmen were busy preparing a better berth for a vessel which seems to have taken the ground a little too soon. On a sudden some one raised a cry that the ship was listing over, and while some four men were able to escape, one poor fellow was unable to do so, and the ship fell upon his lower extremities and loins. Now this was thought, perhaps, to be no great danger, for they could take away the sludge and extricate him. So they began to shore the ship, and willing hands brought ropes and blocks, and wedges, and earnest strength. But they soon discovered that the thing was impossible from the nature of the bottom of the river, and from the position of the cargo, which, I suppose, they could not speedily remove. The man was jammed under the bulwarks, and must remain fixed there without hope. There was just one awful hour before the coming tide would reach the spot. Well might a solemn hush succeed the frantic labours of the townsmen as death was seen riding on the advancing flood. The poor creature had to lie there that hour as the tide came gently in. A minister stood by his side praying with him; let us trust that his soul found peace with God! But O the terror of his position; well might he say, "Cover my head, that I may not see the water." Steadily the cold unpitying waters flowed on until a corpse was hidden where an hour or so before a strong man laboured. This is a graphic picture of the position of every ungodly man! He does not know it, but the waves of time are coming up about him now, and *we* cannot help him to escape. The load of his sins is on his loins: he cannot deliver himself; the great waters of God's wrath must swallow him up quick. O, sinner, would that I could save thee! Alas, it is not in my power! But there is an arm that can deliver

thee; there is one who can lift the burden off thee, and say to thee, "Be free!" Believe in him and thou shalt never die! Trust thou in his power and rest thyself on his love, and thou shalt escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; and when death cometh it shall be no death to thee, but a peaceful migration from the land of shadows to the world of substance. God help us to be wise, that we may remember our latter end!

I would say a few more words to the sinner. I cannot think, O worldling, why thou shouldest love this world so much when it is so soon to vanish! In the old Greek cities they had a king every year, and, because it was so poor a thing to be a king for only one year and then to be a common man again, all the citizens dreaded to be kings. How canst thou long to be rich, when thou art only to be rich for so short a time? When the sailor is just about to furl his sail because he is near the port, he will not fret himself with some little inconvenience in the ship; and wherefore art thou so sore vexed with all these little trials, when thou art so near the eternal haven? When men buy property on a short lease, they will not give much for it, for they are only to have it for a brief term; wherefore spendest thou thy soul to buy this world? What will it profit thee, if thou gain it, if thy soul be lost? When men have a house and they are soon to leave it, they will not lay out much in repairing it; wherefore, then, carest thou so much for thy body? Why mindest thou so much *this* life; the bell is even now trembling to toll for thee, and the grave is yawning that it may swallow thee up? Oh man! Oh man! I would that thou wert wise! Thou art to live for ever, for ever, for ever, either

> "In flames that no abatement know,
> Though briny tears for ever flow."

or else in joy beyond degree. Which shall it be with thee, man? If thou diest as thou art, O sinner, remember, there remaineth nothing for thee but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! I pray thee by the love of God, to consider thy ways. Thus saith the Lord unto thee this day by my lips, as truly as he spake to Hezekiah by the prophet of old, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." How wilt thou stand, sinner, in the day when the Lord cometh to make inquisition for sin, and to avenge their iniquity upon the heads of the unpardoned? Fly, sinner; God help thee by his grace to fly now to yonder open door, where Jesus waits to receive thee and to put away thy sin. Whosoever believeth on him is not condemned. Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of man is lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

IV. Come, come, ye wise men, rise and leave this theatre, we have seen enough of it. "The fashion of this world passeth away;" and for you and for me happy shall it be when it shall have passed away for ever. But is there nothing real? Can I do nothing real here? Is there nothing I can do that shall last for ever? Yes, *the soul* is lasting. Then let me see to my own soul. Let me make my calling and election sure, for I shall have been of all fools the most mad, if I shall have trifled with

these things and yet have neglected my soul. The Roman emperor, Claudius, once invaded Great Britain, but his performance only consisted of gathering pebbles and shells from the sea-coast. This shall be my triumph, this my sole reward, if here in this world I live only to gather wealth. At the last I shall be as though I gathered pebbles, for these things shall be of no value to me if my soul shall perish. O Lord, by thy rich grace set me upon a sure foundation, and make me right before thy face.

Yes, there are some real things besides my own soul. There are *other men's souls.* What am I doing for them? Am I teaching, am I preaching, or, if I am not doing this, am I helping others to preach? Am I doing my best to add to the kingdom of Christ by the ingathering of immortals? Have I a sphere in the ragged school or in tract distributing, or am I helping in some way or other to do good? For, if not, my life is a play, I am doing nothing real; I am only hurrying here and there, and when it comes to the last I shall have been as a workmen that has neglected his own work to play with children in the streets! Dig up your buried talents, O idlers. Work while it is called to-day, O ye who are given to slumber.

Yes, there is something real—*there is Christ's Church.* The Church that is to shine like the stars in heaven for ever, the Bride of the Lamb—what am I doing for Her? Do I seek the good of Jerusalem? As a member of the Church, do I contribute to its strength? Do I give of my substance to her efforts, and of my talents to her doings? Do I cast myself wholly into the arms of Christ, and work for him! Yes, there is something real—*Jesus is so.* Am I glorifying him here on earth? When I see him in his poor people, do I feed him? When he shivers at my door in the garb of poverty, do I clothe him? When I know that he hath need, do I visit him? If so, I am doing real things. If I devote my life to God, to Christ, to his Church, to the souls of men, and if my own soul is saved, then I am living; but if not, I am dead while I live. "*Let us live while we live!*" Alas! how many are dying while they live, drivelling while they live! Oh! the scores of pounds we spend on ourselves; the hundreds we give to our own comfort! And where is that? It is gone like smoke! But that which is given to God lasts and endures; it is treasured up in God's bank; that which is given to the poor and needy is made—though unrighteous mammon—to be treasured up in heaven! But I know many practical persons will say, "Yes, this is a very pretty speech for a young minister; but these ministers do not understand business; they cannot be expected to understand temporal matters." I would to God ye understood them half so well, for our understanding in this matter we know is sound; and when you shall come to see these things in the light of eternity streaming between the curtains of your dying bed, you will understand, then, that there was nothing worth living for but God, and Christ, and his Church; and you will give your verdict then with mine to this, that truly to live must be Christ, or else to die never can be gain!

God add his blessing, and may some be led to trust in Jesus this morning!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ROYAL PAIR IN THEIR GLORIOUS CHARIOT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 30TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."—Solomon's Song iii. 6—11.

GREAT princes in the east are in the habit of travelling in splendid palanquins, which are at the same time chariots and beds. The person reclines within, screened by curtains from public view; a body-guard protects the equipage from robbers, and blazing torches light up the path along which the travellers proceed. King Solomon, in this Song, describes the Church of Christ, and Christ himself, as travelling through the world in such a palanquin. The day is coming when both our divine Lord and his chosen bride shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of all men. The present age is the period of concealment—the mystical Solomon and his beloved Solyma are both on earth, but they are unseen of men; like the ark of old they dwell within curtains; only the anointed priests of God can discern their beauties, and even these gaze rather by faith than by sight. "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is certainly true, for Jesus is here; but equally correct is that word of Peter, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He is here in the reality, power, and influence of his presence, but he is not here as to the visibility of his kingdom and person, for we wait with our loins girt about, and with patience of hope, until the revelation of Jesus Christ. The portion of the blessed canticle now before us is, we think, descriptive of the progress of the hidden Christ through the world. He has been borne along, in very truth, but he himself has been so little perceived of men, that they even ask the question, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" He is not now manifested openly to men. If any should say, "Lo here!" or "Lo there! this

is Christ!" believe them not, for Christ is not as yet seen. When he doth come he shall be as perceptible as the lightning's flash, which every man's eye discerneth without the need of an instructor. So, also, with his true Church. She also is hidden like her Lord, and though her hand, her foot, or her face may be sometimes seen, yet the whole elect body has never yet been beheld. If any say, "Lo, here is the Church of Christ!" or "Lo there!" believe them not, for it is a fact that there is no corporation of men of which we can say exclusively or even universally, "Lo, this is the Church of Christ." There are tares growing with the wheat in the best guarded field, and on the other hand no one enclosure contains all the wheat. The true Church of Christ is scattered here and there; it is found amongst all denominations, and there is not one denomination of which you can say, "This only is the Church of Christ, or all its members belong to the body of Christ's spouse." Just now the mystical bride is in a certain sense as invisible as her husband. Behold, then, the betrothed ones carried through the world in the sumptuous chariot of which we have to speak this morning.

I must now claim your attention while I notice, first, *the glory of the progress of Christ through the world, as described in the sixth verse;* secondly, *the security of Christ's cause, as represented in the seventh and eighth;* thirdly, *the superlative excellence of it, as described in the ninth and tenth;* and lastly, *our joyful duties with regard to it, as openly declared in the eleventh.*

I. First, then, THE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS, THE GLORIOUS ON-GOING OF THE CHURCH AND HER LORD THROUGH THE WORLD.

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The equipage excites the attention of the on-looker; his curiosity is raised, and he asks, "*Who is this?*" Now, in the first progress of the Christian Church, in her very earliest days, there were persons who marvelled greatly; and though they set down the wonders of the day of Pentecost to drunkenness, yet "they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" In after years, many a heathen philosopher said, "What is this new power which is breaking the idols in pieces, changing old customs, making even thrones unsafe—what is this?" By-and-bye, in the age of the Reformation, there were cowled monks, cardinals in their red hats, and bishops, and princes, and emperors, who all said, "What is this? What strange doctrine has come to light?" In the times of the modern reformation, a century ago, when God was pleased to revive his Church through the instrumentality of Whitfield and his brethren, there were many who said, "What is this new enthusiasm, this Methodism? Whence came it, and what power is this which it wields?" And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth his Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in wonder, for they will say, "Who is this?" Spiritual religion is as much a novelty now as in the day when Grecian sages scoffed at it on Mars' Hill. The true Church of God is a stranger and pilgrim still; an alien and a foreigner in every land; a speckled bird; a dove in the midst of ravens; a lily among thorns.

The ignorance of men concerning spiritual things is not, however, caused by the darkness of the things themselves, for Christ and his Church are *the great lights of the world.* When great personages travelled in their palanquins, and more especially on marriage processions, they were attended by a number of persons who, at night, carried high up in the air burning cressets which gave forth a blaze of light. Sometimes these lights were simply torches carried in the hands of running footmen; at other times they were a sort of iron basket lifted high into the air, upon poles, from which went up a pillar of smoke and flame. Our text says "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" a beautiful illustration of the fact that wherever Christ and his cause are carried, light is a sure accompaniment. Into whatsoever region the gospel may journey, her every herald is a flash of light, her every minister a flaming fire. God maketh his Churches the golden candlesticks, and saith unto his children "Ye are the lights of the world." As certainly as ever God said "Let there be light," and there was light over the old creation, so does he say, whenever his Church advances, "Let there be light," and there is light. Dens of darkness, where the bats of superstition had folded their wings and hung themselves up for perpetual ease, have been disturbed by the glare of these divine flambeaux; the innermost caverns of superstition and sin, once black with a darkness which might be felt, have been visited with a light above the brightness of the sun. "The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up." Thus saith the Lord unto the nation where his kingdom cometh, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee!" Bear ye the Church of Christ to the South Seas; carry Christ and his spouse in his palanquin to the Caffre, the Hottentot, or the Esquimaux, and everywhere the night of death is ended, and the morning with its glorious dawn has come. High lift your lamps, ye servants of our Lord. High lift up the cross of the Redeemer; for in him is light, and the light is the life of men.

But you will tell me that our text rather speaks of "*pillars of smoke*" than of sparkling lamps. Brethren, the smoke is but the effect of the flame, and even the pillar of smoke is luminous. What is the smoke that has attended the Church? What but the deaths of her martyrs, the sufferings of her confessors, the patient endurance of her valiant sons? Wherever she goes, the thick smoke of her suffering goeth up to heaven. "We are alway delivered unto death," said the apostle. The cause of truth involves a perpetual sacrifice; her smoke ascendeth for ever. Black smoke I say it is in the eye of man, but unto God it is a sweet-smelling savour. Never did fat of rams, or the fat of kidnies of fed beasts, smell so sweetly before the Most High as the faith, the love, the courage, which has ascended up to heaven from the dauntless heroes of the Church in past ages when at the stake they have been faithful even unto death. Suffering, and grief, and woe, are the lot of the spouse of the despised and rejected Saviour, but all these are as things of nought if thereby she may scatter that terrible blackness which blinds the face of man and makes him a stranger to his God.

It often happens that oriental monarchs of immense possessions, are not content with burning common coals in these cressets, but frequently consume sandal-wood and other woods which give forth a delightful smell; or else, if they use ordinary coals, they sprinkle upon them frankincense and myrrh, so that a delicious perfume is spread on all sides. In the olden times, they also went to great expense in obtaining drugs, which the merchants collected from all parts of the earth, and these were carefully compounded into the renowned "*powders of the merchants*," which yielded a delicious variety of delicate perfumes, not to be produced by any one aromatic essence. Our inspired poet describes the travelling procession of the royal pair, and fails not to dwell upon the delightful perfume of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, "which make the wilderness smell as a garden of roses." Wherever the Church of Christ proceeds, though her pathway is a desert, though she marches through a howling wilderness, she scatters the richest perfume. The page of history were only worthy to be blotted in oblivion were it not for the sweet odours which the Church has left upon it. Look at all past ages, and the track of the Church is still redolent with all the richest fragrance of human virtue and divine grace. Wherever the Church advances she makes manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place! Men believe in Jesus, and unto the Lord faith has all the fragrance of myrrh. They love Jesus; and love in the esteem of heaven is better than frankincense. Loving Christ they endeavour to be like him, till patience, humility, brotherly-kindness, truthfulness, and all things that are honest, lovely, and of good repute, like "powders of the merchant," are spread abroad throughout the whole earth. Tell me where the Church is not, and I will tell you where sin reigns; tell me where Christ and his Church are carried, and I will tell you where you shall find every virtue that can adorn humanity, and every excellence that can magnify the excellence of the grace of God. If you would find an antidote for the deadly exhalations which lurk among this world's deserts of sin; if you would destroy the foul pestilence which reigns in the darkness of heathenism, of Popery, and of infidelity, cry unto the Mighty One—"Arise, thou unknown traveller, arise, and bid thy servants carry thee into the midst of all this misery and death! The light of thy flaming torches shall scatter the darkness, and the burning of thy precious perfumes shall say unto evil—'Fold thy wings!' and unto the pestilence of sin—'Get thee back unto thy den!'"

Among the ten wonders which Jewish tradition ascribes to the temple, we find that the rain never extinguished the fire of the wood which was laid in order upon the altar, nor did the wind ever conquer the pillar of smoke so as to disperse or bend it. Verily it is so with the Church of God, as she cometh out of the wilderness: who shall quench her flaming lamp, or stay the incense of her golden censers? Ride on, Great Prince, and bear thy spouse with thee in thy majestic chariot, till thou hast lit the world with thy divine light, and hast made it a temple filled with a cloud of incense of sweet smell to the nostrils of Jehovah!

II. We have, secondly, to notice THE SECURITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH AT ALL TIMES.

Of course when travelling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around; wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan; and more especially was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends. What shall I say of the attacks which have been made upon the Church of Christ, and upon Christ himself? They have been incessant. When one form of evil has been routed, another has presented itself. Evil teems with children. The frogs and lice of Egypt were not more numerous than the enemies of the Lord's anointed and his bride. Every day produces new battles. These attacks arise from all quarters; sometimes from the world, and sometimes, alas! from even professed members of the Church. Adversaries lurk everywhere, and until the Church and her Lord shall be revealed in the splendour of the Millennium, having left the wilderness for ever, we must expect to find her molested on every side. My dear brethren, we know that Christ's cause in the world is always safe because of divine protection, and because the legions of God's angels keep watch and ward over the saints. But we have something more tangible than this. Our gracious God has been pleased to commit unto *men* the ministry of Christ. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The Lord ordaineth that chosen men should be the protectors of his Church; not that they have any power as of themselves to do anything, but He girdeth the weak with strength and maketh the feeble mighty; so then, men, even the sons of men stand in array around the travelling palanquin of Christ, to guard both the bridegroom and the bride.

Read the 7th and 8th verses carefully, and you will notice *that there are enough swordsmen.* "Threescore valiant men are about it." There are always enough men chosen of God to guard the Church. Poor Unbelief holds up her hands and cries—"Ah! the good men are all dead; Zion is under a cloud; the Lord hath taken away the great men; we have no valiant defenders of the faith, none such as this crisis may require!" Ah! Unbelief, let the Lord say unto thee as he did unto Elias—"Yet have I left me seven-thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." There shall be just as many warriors as the crisis shall require. We do not know where the men are to come from, but the Lord will provide. There may be sitting in the Sunday school to-day a child who shall one day shake this nation from one end to the other; there may be even here, unknown, obscure, and unobserved, the man whom God will make strong to rebuke the infamous infidelity of our age. We know not where the anointing rests. We, in our folly, would anoint Eliab or Abinadab, but God hath chosen David, the shepherd's boy, and he will bring him forth and teach him how to hurl the stone at Goliath's brow. Tremble not, neither be ye afraid; God who makes man and makes man's mouth, will find the sixty men when the sixty shall be needed. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of them that published it." The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Observe that these warriors *are men of the right mettle.* "Yes," says poor trembling Little-Faith, "we have hosts of men, but they are not like the greathearts of old; they have not the qualifications which the age requires." Ah! but remember, about the bed of Solomon there are "threescore *valiant* men;" and glory be unto my Master, while I may not flatter the ministry, I must not dishonour him by believing that he has left his Church without *valiant* defenders. There are Luthers still living who bid defiance to all adversaries; men who can say, "We count not our lives dear unto us that we may finish our course with joy, and fulfil the ministry which the Lord hath delivered unto us." Fear not; you may not at present know the valour of the Lord's body-guard, but when the Church's battle grows hotter than just now, suddenly there shall be seen a champion stalking to the front of the battle, and men shall say, "Who is this? How he wields that battle-axe! How he splits the armour of his foes! See how he piles them heaps on heaps, and mounts that hill of slaughtered enemies to smite a greater foe! Who is this?" And the answer shall be, "This is a man whom God hath found; the world knew not of him, but God has trained him in the camps of Dan, and now the Spirit moveth him to smite the Philistines.

"Ah!" I think I hear you say, "but though there may be so many men, and men of the right sort, I am afraid *they are not in the right place.*" Look again at the text. It is written—"Threescore valiant men are ABOUT IT;" that is, there are some on that side, and some on this, some before, and some behind; they are all round the travelling chariot of Christ. "I wish there might be one in our parish," says one. Pray for him, and he who has promised to send you all good things may yet send him to you. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth labourers into his harvest." It is singular how God sometimes raises a mighty man, in this denomination, then in that, and then in the other. Suppose any body of Christians should try to monopolize all the valiant men themselves; why, they could not do it, because every side of the royal bed must be guarded, and in his own place each man is set for the defence of the gospel. The Church is compassed about with mighties, who are under God to do great exploits. If the Lord guides the flight of sparrows, surely he knows how to dispose his ministers; and let the Church be well content to let them occupy their posts until the wilderness is past, and the glory shall be revealed. The Church often makes mistakes, and thinks she can make ministers, or at least choose their position. She can do no such thing. God sends the valiant man; all you can do is to recognise his valour, and accept him as your champion; beyond that you cannot go; this is God's work, not man's. A minister made by men, made valiant by human strength, had better betake himself at once ignominiously to his tent, for his disgrace will be certain. God who sends the men, knows where to put them, so that they may stand round about the bed, and leave no corner unprotected.

Notice that these men *are all well armed.* The text says expressly, "They all hold swords." What swords are these? Every valiant man in Christ's Israel holds the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A man who is a good textuary will usually be a good divine; he who draws from the treasury of the written word will

find his spoken word to be fruitful in profit to the people of God. If we use carnal reason; if we rely upon refinement, argument, eloquence, or any other form of the wisdom of man, we shall soon find our enemies will defeat us; but to ply the Word right and left; to give gospel cuts and strokes such as the devil himself cannot parry, this is to overcome the world through the Word of God. Besides this, and here is an opportunity for you all to carry swords—every valiant man in God's Israel carries the sword of prayer, which is comparable to those huge two-handed swords of the olden time, which the soldier lifted up and brought down with such tremendous force, as to cleave a man in halves: prayer is a weapon which no man can effectually resist. If you know how to use it, bring it down upon your foeman's head, and woe unto him! I would to God that in this Church there were found many of these valiant men of Israel! Indeed, would God all the Lord's servants were prophets, that it might be said of all of you that you hold swords. Your holy lives can be swords with which to smite your enemies. The tongues with which you speak of Christ lovingly, tenderly, persuasively—these may be weapons against our common enemy. Oh that when we hear the muster roll at last, it may be said of every Church-member that he held a sword! Do not tremble, ye timid ones, for the ark of the Lord; neither let your fears promote your unbelief; God knows full well how to give the right weapons to the right men, and his Church shall be secure even to the end.

Further, my brethren, these men are not only well armed, *but they are well trained.* They are all expert in war; men who have endured temptations themselves; men whose souls have been exercised; men who have slain both the lion and the bear, and are men of war from their youth. Christian ministers especially should be no novices, but both in the school of temptation, and in some school of the prophets, they should be disciplined for fight. May there be such found here! I look out daily for such among you as are taught of God, and much of my time is spent with our young soldiers to make them expert in war. O that the Lord would hear my prayers and bless our college with men, and means, and above all with his Spirit. Fools are not the men for this age. We want a sound knowledge of doctrine, practical power in preaching, and a thorough insight into the human heart; and where these by earnest prayer can be found in a man and further developed by careful teaching, we are bound to give our aid. Such men should be looked after, and no pains should be spared to bring them forth; in fact, dear friends, you ought to think it a high honour to be allowed to help in putting such men into working order. Oh! how I groan to get my friends to feel the importance of sending out trained young ministers. I give my time and my substance cheerfully, but when will the Christian Church help in this matter as it should?

Further, these men were not only well-trained, but you will see *that they were always ready.* Each man has his sword upon his thigh, ready to be drawn forth. I know some nominal ministers who seem to me to carry no sword at all. They keep a sheath, a very handsome sheath, with a hilt at the top and a stick inside. What is the good of such men? We want men to have *swords* in their sheaths, men who can

speak with power, and have the demonstration of the Spirit and the power thereof resting upon them. Such men should wear their swords where they are to be got at, so that when the adversary comes they may dash at him at once. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, thy Lord hath not left thee, even at this day, without some such men!

Observe also that these men were *watchful*, for "they had their sword on their thigh because of fear *in the night*." They never sleep, but watch always for the Church's interest. Pray ye that the Lord may raise up many such, who night and day with tears shall watch for the souls of men, and against the enemies of our Israel.

Dear friends, some of you may at times be alarmed when you hear of attacks made upon the Bible. At one time it was thought that ethnology would prove that the human race could not be one; and Moses was terribly abused by some who said it was not possible that all of us could have come of one pair. That battle was fought, and you hear nothing of it now; it is over; learning and argument in the hand of God has routed those antagonists. Then they pelted us with shells, and bones of lizards. Geology threatened to dig our graves; but we have lived all through that struggle, and we have found geology to be a great blessing, for it has shed a new light on the first chapter of Genesis, and made us understand a great deal better what it meant. Another Amalekite advances to combat; this time it is with figures and numbers; we are to be speared with arithmetic, and slain with algebra! And what will be the result of it? Why, it will do the Bible a world of good, for we shall understand it better. I thank God whenever the Bible is attacked; for all those who know the times and seasons, begin to study just that part of Scripture more carefully, and then we get a clearer light shed upon it, and we find ourselves more confirmed than ever that this is the very truth, and that God hath revealed it to us. "Well, but who will take this matter up?" I do not know, and I do not particularly care, but I know my Master has his threescore valiant men round about his bed, and that each man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night, and never mind what the battle may be, the end of it will be for God's glory, and there shall be progress with the chariot of Christ through that which seemed as if it must overthrow it. Cast aside your fears; rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Zion! Thy Lord is with thee in the travelling chariot, and the threescore valiant men are watching against thy foes.

III. Meanwhile, reposing in peace, let us notice THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS CHARIOT IN WHICH JESUS RIDES.

It is not difficult to convey to persons the most unacquainted with Eastern manners and customs, an idea of what this palanquin is. It is a sort of large sedan in which one or two persons may recline with ease. Of course, this palanquin could not be made of gold or silver, because then it would be too heavy for carriage; it must be made of wood; hence King Solomon made a bed, or chariot, or palanquin, of the wood of Lebanon. Then there needs to be four pillars supporting the covering and the curtains; the pillars thereof are of silver. The bottom of it should be something massive, in order to sustain the weight of the person; the bottom thereof is of gold. The

canopy on the top, is a covering of purple. Since to lie on gold would be very unpleasant, it is covered with delicate, daintily wrought carpets; and so we have the bottom thereof paved, or rather carpeted with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Some delicate devices of needlework adorn the bottom of this bed-chariot in which the king and his spouse recline during their journey.

The doctrines of the gospel are comparable, for their antiquity, for their sweet fragrance, for their incorruptibility, to the wood of Lebanon. The gospel of Christ never decays; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Not one single truth, bears any sign of rot. And to those souls that are enlightened from above, the gospel gives forth a fragrance far richer than the wood of Lebanon.

> "No beams of cedar or of fir,
> Can with thy precious truth compare."

I rejoice to know concerning you as a Church, that the more you understand the doctrines of grace the better you love them. You are confirmed in the present faith, and well you may be, for our doctrine is worthy of your confidence. We are not afraid that any truth which Christ has uttered should be tried by the most stringent criticism, for not one single stone of all the bulwarks of Gospel doctrine can ever be removed out of its place. When cedars of Lebanon have yielded to the worm, even then shall the truth as it is in Jesus remain the same.

As for the silver pillars which bear up the canopy, to what should I liken them but to *the attributes of God* which support and guarantee the efficiency of the great atonement of Christ beneath which we are sheltered. There is the silver pillar of God's *justice*. He cannot, he will not smite the soul that hides beneath the cross of Christ. If Christ hath paid the debt, how is it possible that God should visit again a second time the iniquity of his people, first on their Surety, and then again on themselves? Then stands the next, the solid pillar of his *power*. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Then on the other side is the pillar of his *love*, a silver pillar indeed, bright and sparkling to the eye; love unchanging and eternal, strong as the power and fast as the justice which bear up the canopy on the other side. And here on this side stands *immutability*, another column upon which the atonement rests. If God could change, then might he cast away his blood-bought; but "because I am God and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob rejoice." As for the *covering of the chariot*, it is of purple. I need not tell you where it was dyed. No Tyrian hues are mingled here. Look up, Christian, and delight thyself in that blood-red canopy which shelters thee from the sun by day and from the moon by night! From hell and heaven, from time and from eternity, art thou secured by this covering which is of purple. Oh! tempting theme to dilate upon the precious and glorious doctrine of atonement! Whenever our adversaries assail the Church, whatever may be the apparent object of their animosity, their real one is always the same, a desperate

hatred to the great truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well, as *they* hate it, let *us* love it; and under it let us take our greatest delight.

As for the *bottom of this palanquin*, which is of gold,—may not this represent the eternal purpose and counsel of God, that purpose which he formed in himself or ever the earth was? Pure was the decree of God, holy, wise, just, for his own glory, and most true; and as the precious things of the temple were all of gold, well may the basis of eternal love, an immutable and unchangeable decree, be compared to much fine gold. I do not know, brethren, how it is with you, but I find it most pleasant to have as the basis of my hope, the firm decree of God. Atonement covers me, I know, but still on this I must rest, Jehovah wills it; God decrees it; he hath said it, and it must be done; he hath commanded and it standeth fast. Oh! that golden sovereignty, whereon is written—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Dear brethren, the Apostle plainly tells us that this is the basis on which even the silver pillars rest, "for he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world."

Then, to make this all soft and pleasant to recline upon, here is pavement of needlework. Soft cushions of love on which to rest. There is a double meaning here, for both the bride and bridegroom find rest in love. Our Lord finds rest in the love of his people. "Here will I dwell for ever." They do, as it were, make these carpets of needle-work in their love and affection for him, and in their trust and confidence in him; and here he rests. On the other hand, our Beloved spent his life to work for us our bed of rest, so that we must translate it "love *of*," as well as love *for* the daughters of Jerusalem." *We* rest in Christ's love; *he* rests in our love. Come, I need not explain further, brothers and sisters. Take your rest now to the full. You are married unto Christ; you are one with him; betrothed unto him in faithfulness, embraced in the arms of his affection. Fear not the noise of archers; the "threescore valiant men" protect you, and the king himself embraces you; now solace yourself with him; take your full of his sweet society, and say unto him from the bottom of your heart, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." Leave fighting for the evidences to the valiant men who can do it; as for you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, rest upon your Lord's bosom; leave conflict to the men ordained to fight, the men expert in war; as for you, be you expert in communion; understand the motions of Jesus' heart; look unto the lustre of his loving eyes; behold his beauties; be ravished with his divine affection to you; and now let your soul be satisfied with favour, and be full of the lovingkindness of the Lord!

IV. We close, then, by noticing THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVING HEART in connection with the subject.

Let every believer, while he recognises himself as part of the Church inside the palanquin, yet look upon himself personally as one of the daughters of Zion, and let us each *go forth* this morning to meet King Solomon. It is not King David; King David is the type of Christ up to the time of his crucifixion—"despised and rejected of men,

a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and yet King of the Jews. King Solomon is the type of Christ ever since the day when

> "They brought his chariot from above,
> To bear him to his throne."

and, with sound of trumpet, conducted him to his Father's presence-chamber above. Now it is King Solomon; King Solomon for wealth, for wisdom, for dignity, for honour, for peace. He is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and therefore is he King Solomon going forth. Get up from your beds of sloth; rise from your chambers of ease; go forth, go forth to pray, to labour, to suffer; go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind; go forth to walk with him alone, leaving even your kinsfolk and acquaintance if they will not follow with you. Wherefore tarriest thou at home when the King is abroad? "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, come ye forth to meet him," *and behold King Solomon.* To-day let your eye rest upon him. Let your eye behold the head that to-day is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns. Behold ye, too, his hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the sceptre. Look to his girdle where swing the keys of heaven, and death, and hell. Look to his feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon's head. Behold his legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at his heart, that bosom which heaves with love to you, and when you have surveyed him from head to foot exclaim, "Yea, he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon. Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus. Are you troubled, and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to him, behold king Solomon. I pray you remember the light in which you are to behold him. Do not think that Christ has lost his former power. Behold him as he was at Pentecost, *with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals.* Oh! how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad, and three thousand fell slain by his right hand to be made alive by the breath of his mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned him, when they brought of their substance and laid it at the apostle's feet, neither did any man count that ought he had was his own. They crowned him with their heart's purest love; the Church had on her brow her bridal-wreath, and her husband wore his nuptial crown. Behold him to-day as wearing that crown still, for he is the same Christ, and do you go forth to meet him, and labour for him, and love him as the first saints did.

Forget not that his mother is to crown him soon in the day of his espousals. He is our brother as well as our husband, and the Church is *his* mother as well as ours. Oh! she is to crown him soon! The day of his espousals draweth nigh. Hark! I hear the trumpet sound! Jesus comes, and his feet stand upon Mount Olivet; kings and princes lick the dust before him; he gathers sheaves of sceptres beneath his arm even as the mower gathereth wheat with the sickle. He treadeth on principalities and powers, the young lion and the dragon doth he trample under foot. And now his saints cry, "Hosanna, blessed is he

that cometh in the name of the Lord." The long-expected one is come, and his mother crowns him in the day of his espousals! Courage, poor heart, courage! Go forth and see King Solomon to-day as he is to be, and remember,

"It doth not yet appear
How great we shall be made;
But when we see our Saviour here,
We shall be like our Head."

When we look on *Him;* let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be wiped from our brow and the sweat from our face; the shackles are to be taken from our wrist, and the gyves from our legs; and we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all his splendour, and taught to reign with him world without end.

But there are some here that I can hardly call the daughters of Jerusalem, yet they are always round about Zion's gate. Oh, there are many of you who are always listening to our voice, and joining in our hymns, and yet you have not seen our Master yet! Go forth; leave your sinful pleasures, and leave your self-righteousness too; go forth and behold King Solomon. Look to Jesus, sinner, bleeding on the cross, and as thou lookest, love and trust; and I know that as soon as thou hast seen him and trusted him, thou wilt have a crown to put upon his head. It will be the day of thine espousal unto him, and thou wilt crown him with such a crown. Thou wilt decorate that crown with jewels dug from the secret mine of thy deepest heart, and having made this crown, thou wilt put it on his head, and fall down before him and sing—

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

Well, then, we will lay aside every fear, and continue all the day gazing upon our matchless Christ, adoring him, exalting him, and having fellowship with him; for all is well; his travelling chariot is always safe, and soon will he step out of it with his bride at his right hand, and the world shall be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair when he shall be exalted, and they that are with him, before the presence of his Father and all the holy angels!

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LIFE AND WALK OF FAITH.

A Sermon

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REV. C. H. SPURGEON

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"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—Colossians ii. 6.

OUR nature is fond of change. Although man was made in the image of God at first, it is plain enough that any trace of immutability which he may once have possessed has long ago departed. Man, unrenewed, could he possess the joys of heaven, would in time grow weary of them, and crave for change. When the children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on angels' food, they murmured for variety, and groaned out, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." It is little wonder, then, that we need cautions against shifting the ground of our hope and the object of our faith. Another evil principle will co-work with this love of change in our hearts, and produce much mischief—our natural tendency to build upon our own works. For a time that pernicious habit is cured by conviction of sin. The law, with its sharp axe, cuts down the lofty cedar of fleshly confidence, and withers all its verdure; but, since the root still remains, at the very scent of water it sprouts again, and there is good need to set the axe going with all its former edge and weight. When we think legality quite dead, it revives, and, linking hands with our love of change, it tempts us to forsake our simple standing upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, and urges us to advance to a something which it decorates before our eyes with fancied colours, and makes out to our feeble understandings to be better or more honourable to ourselves. Though this will certainly be again beaten down in a Christian, for he will meet with trouble after trouble when once he goeth astray from his first path, yet again the old secret desire to be something, to do something, to have some little honour by performing the works of the law, will come in, and we shall have need to hear the voice of wisdom in our hearts saying to us, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;" persevere in the same way in which ye have begun, and, as at the first Christ Jesus was the source of your life, the principle of your action, and the joy of your spirit, so let him be the same even till life's end, the same when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter into the joy and the rest which remain for the people of God.

In trying to teach this very useful, though simple lesson, I shall, in

the plainest possible language, first of all talk a little of the text *by way of exposition;* then, secondly, *by way of advocacy;* and then, thirdly, *by way of application.*

I. Oh that the gracious Spirit, who alone can lead us into all truth, would aid me while I endeavour to open up this verse BY WAY OF EXPOSITION.

In expounding the text, we readily break it up into two parts: here is the life of faith—receiving Christ Jesus the Lord; here is, secondly, the walk of faith—so walk ye in him.

1. The Holy Spirit here reveals to us *the life of faith*—the way by which you and I are saved, if saved at all. Remark, carefully, that it is represented as *receiving*. Now the word receiving *implies the very opposite of anything like merit.* Merit is purchasing; merit might be called making by labour, or winning by valour; but receiving is just the accepting of a thing as a gift. The eternal life which God gives his people is in no sense whatever the fruit of their exertions; it is the gift of God. As the earth drinks in the rain, as the sea receives the streams, as night accepts light from the stars, so we, giving nothing, partake freely of the grace of God. The saints are not by nature wells, or streams, they are but cisterns into which the living water flows. They are but as the empty vessel; sovereign mercy puts them under the conduit-pipe, and they receive grace upon grace till they are filled to the brim. He that talks about winning salvation by works; he that thinks he can earn it by prayers, by tears, by penance, by mortification of the flesh, or by zealous obedience to the law, makes a mistake; for the very first principle of the divine life is not giving out, but receiving. It is that which comes from Christ into me which is my salvation; not that which springs out of my own heart, but that which comes from the divine Redeemer and changes and renews my nature. It is not what I give out, but what I receive, which must be life to me.

The idea of receiving, again, seems to imply in it *a sense of realization*, making the matter *a reality*. One cannot very well receive a shadow; we receive that which is substantial. Gold, silver, precious stones—such things we can receive; estates, riches, bread, water, food, raiment—all these are things which are substances to us, and therefore it becomes possible for us to receive them. We do not receive a dream; we do not receive, again I say, a shadow; we do not speak of receiving a spectre; we do not receive a phantom. There is something real in a thing that is received. Well now so is it also in the life of faith; we realize Christ. While we are without faith, Christ is a name to us, a person that may have lived a long while ago, so long that his life is only a history to us now! By an act of faith Christ becomes a real person in the consciousness of our heart, as real to us as our own flesh, and blood, and bones, and we speak of him and think of him as we would of our brother, our father, our friend. Our faith gives a substance to the history and idea of Christ, puts real solidity into the spirit and name of Christ, and that which to the worldly man is but a phantom, a thing to hear about, and talk about, becomes to us a thing to taste, and handle, to lay hold upon, and to receive as real and true. I know, ye that are unconverted, that ye think all these things an idle tale; but you that are saved, you who

have received Christ, you know that there is substance here, and shadow everywhere else. This has become to you the one grand reality, that God is in Christ reconciling you unto himself.

But receiving means also a third thing, that is *getting a grip of it, grasping it.* The thing which I receive becomes my own. I may believe it to be real, but that is not receiving it. I may believe, also, that if I ever do get it it must be given to me, and that I cannot earn it for myself, but still that is not receiving it. Receiving is the *bona fide* taking into my hand and appropriating to myself as my own property that which is given to me. Now this is what the soul doth when it believes on Christ. Christ becomes *my* Christ; his blood cleanses my sin, and it is cleansed; his righteousness covers me, and I am clothed with it; his Spirit fills me, and I am made to live by it. He becomes to me as much mine as anything that I can call my own; nay, what I call my own here on earth is not mine; it is only lent to me, and will be taken from me; but Christ is so mine, that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to rob me of him. Oh! I hope, dear friends, you have that blessed appropriating faith which says, "Yes, he is not another man's Christ, he is my Christ," I hope you can look into his face to-day and say, "*My* beloved, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." I hope you do not talk of these things as I might talk of my lord So-and-So's park, and admire its beauties, while I myself have no right to one acre of the many thousands within the park-fence; but I trust, on the other hand, you can say—"The blessings and promises of the Lord my God are all my own; whatever I read of in the covenant of grace that is good, that is comely, that is desirable, I have heard a voice say in my ears, 'Lift up now thine eyes, and look to the north, and the south, to the east, and the west—all this have I given *thee* to be thy possession for ever and ever by a covenant of salt.'" Now put these three things together, and I think you have the idea of receiving Christ. To receive him is to have him as the result of God's free gift; to realize him; and then to appropriate him to yourselves.

The word "receive" is used in some ten or a dozen senses in holy Scripture; five of them will suffice my purpose just now. To receive is often used for *taking*. We read of receiving a thousand shekels of silver, and of receiving money, garments, olive-yards, sheep, and oxen. Perhaps in this sense we understand the words of the Master—"No man can receive anything unless it be given him from above," and that other sentence—"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." We take Christ into us—to return to my old simile—as the empty vessel takes in water from the stream; so we receive Christ. The love, life, merit, nature, and grace of Jesus freely flow into us, as the oil into the widow's vessels. But the word is also used in Scripture to signify *holding that which we take in;* indeed, a vessel without a bottom could hardly be said to receive water. I do not suppose any one would talk of a sieve receiving water, except in a mock sense. But the life of faith consists in holding within us that which Christ hath put into us, so that Jesus Christ is formed in us the hope of glory. By faith it comes in; by faith it is kept in; faith gives me what

I have; faith keeps what I have; faith makes it mine; faith keeps it mine; faith gets hold of it with one hand, and then clasps it with both hands with a grasp that neither death nor life can loose. Then, receiving sometimes means in Scripture simply *believing*. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." We read of receiving false prophets, that is, believing them. Now, to receive Christ is to believe him. He says, "I can save you."—I receive that. He says, "I will save you."—I receive that. He says, "Trust me and I will make you like myself."—I receive that. Whatever Jesus says, I believe him, and receive him as true. I make his word so true to myself that I act upon it as being true, and regard it not as a word that may possibly be true, but which must be true, even if heaven and earth should pass away. This is receiving Christ—believing what he has said. Receiving, also, often signifies in Scripture *entertaining*. Thus the barbarous people at Melita received Paul and his companions kindly, and kindled a fire. Ah! after we have once found all in Christ to be our own, and have received him into ourselves by faith, then we entreat the Lord to enter our hearts and sup with us. We give him the best seat at the table of our souls; we would feast him on the richest dainties of our choicest love. We ask him to abide with us from morn till eve; we would commune with him every day, and every hour of the day. We entertain him; we have a reception-chamber in our hearts, and we receive Christ. And then, once again, receiving in Scripture often signifies *to enjoy*. We hear of receiving a crown of life which fadeth not away; that is, enjoying it, enjoying heaven, and being satisfied with all its bliss. Now, dear friends, when we receive Christ, there is intended in this an enjoying of it. I am only now talking the simplicities of our faith, but I do want to make them very personal to you. Are you thus enjoying Christ? If you had a crown you would wear it; you have a Christ—feed on him. If you were hungry and there were bread on the table, you would eat. Oh! eat and drink, beloved, of your Lord Jesus Christ. If you have a friend, you enjoy his company: you have a friend in Christ; Oh! enjoy his conversation. Do not leave him, like a bottle of cordial for the fainting, sealed up from us; let him not be as some choice dainty all untasted, while you are hungry. Oh! receive Christ, for this is the very heaven and rest of the soul. His flesh is meat indeed, his blood is drink indeed. Never did angels taste such divine fare. Come hither saints and satiate yourselves in him. To take him into one's self, to hold him there, to believe every word he says, to entertain him in our hearts, and to enjoy the luscious sweetness which he must confer upon all those who have eaten his flesh, and have been made to drink of his blood—this it is to receive Christ.

But we have not brought out the real meaning of this life of faith yet till we dwell upon another word. As ye have received. Received what? Salvation may be described as the blind receiving sight, the deaf receiving hearing, the dead receiving life; but beloved, beloved, here is a thought here—oh that you may get hold of it! We have not only received these things, but we have received CHRIST. "As ye have received *Christ Jesus the Lord*." Do you catch it? It is true that He gave us life from the dead? He gave us pardon of sin; He gave us imputed

righteousness. These are all precious things, but you see we are not content with them; we have received *Christ himself*. The Son of God has been poured out into us, and we have received him, and appropriated him. Mark, I say, not merely the blessings of the covenant, but *himself;* not merely the purchase of his blood, but he himself from whose veins the blood hath flowed has become ours; and every soul that hath eternal life is this day a possessor of Christ Jesus the Lord. Now we will put this, also, personally to you. Have I received *Christ*, that is the *anointed?* My soul, hast thou seen Christ as the anointed of the Father in the divine decree to execute his purposes? Hast thou seen him coming forth in the fulness of time wearing the robes of his priesthood, the anointed of the Father? Hast thou seen him standing at the altar offering himself as a victim, an anointed priest, anointed with the sacred oil by which God has made him a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec? My soul, hast thou seen Jesus going within the veil and speaking to thy Father and to his Father as one whom the Father has accepted, of whom we can speak, in the language of David, as our shield and God's anointed? Oh! it is a delight indeed to receive Christ not as an unsent prophet, not as a man who came of his own authority, not as a teacher who spoke his own word, but as one who is *Christos*, the anointed, the anointed of God, ordained of the Most High, and therefore most certainly acceptable, as it is written, "*I* have laid help upon one that is mighty; *I* have exalted one chosen out of the people. It pleased the *Father* to bruise him; *he* hath put him to grief." Delightful is the contemplation of Christ under that aspect! Soul, dost thou thus receive the Messias of God? But the text says, "Christ *Jesus*." Now Jesus means a Saviour. *Christ* is his relation to God, *Jesus* his relation to me. Have I received Christ in his relationship to me as a Saviour? My soul, has Christ saved thee? Come, no "ifs" and "ans" about it. Hast thou received him as thy Saviour? Couldest thou say in that happy day when thy faith closed with him, "Yes, Jesus, thou hast saved me!" Oh! there are some professors of religion who do not seem to have received Christ as *Jesus*. They look upon him as one who may help them to save themselves, who can do a great deal for them, or may begin the work but not complete it. Oh! beloved, we must get a hold of him as one that has saved us, that has finished the work. What, know ye not that ye are this day whiter than the driven snow because his blood has washed you? Ye are this day more acceptable to God than unfallen angels ever were, for ye are clothed in the perfect righteousness of a divine one. Christ has wrapped you about with his own righteousness; you are saved; you have received him as God's anointed, see that you receive him as Jesus your Saviour.

Then, again, it is clear that saving faith consisteth also in receiving him *as he is in himself, as the divine Son.* "Ye have received Christ Jesus *the Lord*." Those who say they cannot believe in his Deity have not received him. Others theoretically admit him to be divine, but he is never a subject of confidence as such; *they* have not received him. But I trust I speak to many hundreds this morning who willingly accept his Godhead, and say, "I entertain no doubt about his Deity, and, moreover, on that I risk my soul; I do take him into my heart as

being God over all, blessed for ever, Amen; I kiss his feet while I see his humanity; but I believe that, since those feet could tread the waters, he is divine. I look up to his hands, and as I see them pierced I know that he is human; but as I know that those hands multiplied the loaves and fishes till they fed five thousand, I know that he is divine. I look upon his corpse in the tomb, and I see that he is man; I see him in the resurrection, and I know that he is God. I see him on the cross, suffering, and I know that he is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; but I hear a voice which saith, 'Let all the angels of God worship him;' 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;' and I bow before him and say, 'Oh Lord, thou Son of God and son of Mary, I receive thee as Christ Jesus *the Lord*.'"

Now this is all very plain talking you will say; and I remind you that souls are saved by very plain truths, and the dealings of men's souls with Christ are not carried on in learned or metaphysical terms. We do believe, and so take Christ Jesus the Lord into us, and by that act of faith, without any doing of our own, we are completely saved.

I shall only make this further remark here, that the apostle speaks of this *as a matter of certainty*, and goes on to argue from it. Now we do not argue from a supposition. I must have you clear, dearly beloved in the Lord, that this is a matter of certainty *to you*. We can hardly get to the next point unless you can say, "I have received Jesus." The verse runs, "As or since *ye have* received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him." We must not alter it into, "Since *I hope* I have," "Since *I trust* I have." Ye either have or have not; if ye have not, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and cry to him for his great gift; but if you have, O, dear friends, do not let it be a question with you, but say "Yes, yes, yes, I can say, once for all, I have received him; poor, weak, and worthless though I am, I do put my humble seal to the fact that God is true, and I trust in him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This is the life of faith.

2. Now, in expounding the text, our second point was *the walk of faith*. "Since ye have received him, walk in him." Walk implies, first of all, *action*. Do not let your reception of Christ be a mere thing of thought to you, a subject only for your chamber and your closet, but act upon it all. If you have really received Christ, and are saved, act as if you were saved, with joy, with meekness, with confidence, with faith, with boldness. Walk in him; do not sit down in indolence, but rise and act in him. Walk in him; carry out into practical effect that which you believe. See a man who has received an immense fortune, his purse is bursting, and his caskets are heavy; what does he do? Why, he behaves like a rich man; he sees a luxury which pleases him, and he buys it; there is an estate he desires, and he purchases it; he acts like a rich man. Beloved brethren, you have received Christ—act upon it. Do not play the beggar now that boundless wealth is conferred upon you. Walking, again, implies *perseverance*, not only being in Christ to-day, that would be standing in him and falling from him; but being in him to-morrow, and the next day, and the next, and the next, and the next; walking in him all your walk of life. I remember Matthew Henry, speaking about Enoch walking with God, says he did not only take a

turn or two up and down with God, and then leave him, but he walked with God four hundred years. This implies perseverance. You have received Christ—persevere in receiving him; you have come to trust him—keep on trusting him; you hang about his neck as a poor, helpless sinner—remain hanging there; in other words abide in him. Walking implies *habit.* When we speak of a man's walk and conversation, we mean his habits, the constant tenor of his life. Now, dear friends, if you and I sometimes enjoy Christ, and then forget him; sometimes say he is ours, and anon loose our hold, that is not a habit; we do not *walk* in him. But if you have received him, let it be your habit to live upon him; keep to him; cling to him; never let him go, but live and have your being in Him. This walking implies *a continuance.* There is no notice given in the text of the suspension of this walking, but there must be a continual abiding in Christ. How many Christians there are who think that in the morning and evening they ought to come into the company of Christ, and then they may be in the world all the day. Ah! but we ought always to be in Chirst, that is to say, all the day long, every minute of the day; though worldly things may take up some of my thoughts, yet my soul is to be in a constant state of being in Christ; so that if I am caught at any moment, I am in him; at any hour if any one should say to me, "Now, are you saved?" I may be able still to say, "Yes." And if they ask me for an evidence of it, I may, without saying so, prove it to them by the fact that I am acting like a man who is in Christ, who has Christ in him, has had his nature changed by receiving Christ's nature, and has Christ to be his one end and aim. I suppose, also, that walking signifies *progress.* So walk ye in him; proceed from grace to grace, run forward until you reach the uttermost limit of knowledge that man can have concerning our Beloved. "As ye have received him walk in him."

But now I want you to notice just this; it says, "Walk ye *in him*." Oh! I cannot attempt to enter into the mystery of this text—"Walk *in* him!" You know if a man has to cross a river, he fords it quickly and is out of it again at once, but you are to suppose a person walking *in* a certain element always, in Christ. Just as we walk in the air, so am I to walk in Christ; not sometimes, now and then coming to him and going away from him, but walking in him as my element. Can you comprehend that? Not a soul here can make anything out of that but the most silly jargon, except the man who having received the inner spiritual life, understandeth what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Dear friends, in trying to open up that point just for a moment, let us notice what this walking in Christ must mean. As Christ was at first when we received him *the only ground of our faith;* so as long as we live, we are to stand to the same point. Did you not sing the other day when you first came to him—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all?"

Well, that is how you are to continue to the end. We commence our faith with—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling."

When thou art hoary with honours, when thou art covered with fame, when thou hast served thy Master well, still come in just the same way with—

"A guilty weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall,
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Let not your experience, your sanctification, your graces, your attainments, come in between you and Christ, but just as you took him to be the only pillar of your hope at first, so let him be even to the last. You received Christ, again, as *the substance of your faith.* The infidel laughed at you, and said you had nothing to trust to; but your faith made Christ real to you. Well, now, just as the first day when you came to Jesus you no more doubted the reality of Christ than you did your own existence, so walk ye in him. Well can I recollect that first moment when these eyes looked to Christ! Ah! there was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that thorn-crowned head. I wish it were always so, and indeed it ought to be. As ye have received Christ really, so keep on realising and finding substance in him. And that day, beloved, Christ became to us *the joy of our souls.* Home, friends, health, wealth, comforts—all lost their lustre that day when He appeared, just as stars are hidden by the light of the sun. He was the only Lord and giver of life's best bliss, the one well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. I know that the first day it mattered not to me whether the day itself was gloomy or bright. I had found Christ; that was enough for me. He was my Saviour; he was my all. I do think that that day I could have stood upon the faggots of Smithfield to burn for him readily enough. Well now, just as you received him at first as your only joy, so receive him still, walking in him, making him the source, the centre, ay, and the circumference too of all your souls' range of delight, having your all in him. So, beloved, that day when we received him, we received him as *the object of our love.* Oh! how we loved Christ then! Had we met him that day, we would have broken the alabaster box of precious ointment, and poured it upon his head; we would have washed his feet with our tears, and wiped them with the hairs of our head. Ah! Jesus, when I first received thee, I thought I should have behaved far better than I have; I thought I would spend and be spent for thee, and should never dishonour thee or turn aside from my faith, and devotedness, and zeal; but ah! brethren, we have not come up to the standard of our text—walking in him as we have received him. He has not been by us so well beloved as we dreamed he would have been.

I take it then to be the meaning of our text, as Christ Jesus the Lord was at the first All-in-All to you, so let him be while life shall last.

II. I shall be very brief upon THE ADVOCACY OF THIS PRINCIPLE, for surely you need no urgent persuasion to cleave unto such a Lord as yours.

In advocating this principle, I would say, first of all, suppose, my brethren, you and I having been so far saved by Christ, should now

begin to walk in some one else, what then? Why, *what dishonour to our Lord.* Here is a man who came to Christ and says he found salvation in him, but after relying upon the Lord some half-a-dozen years, he came to find it was not a proper principle, and so now he has begun to walk by feelings, to walk by sight, to walk by philosophy, to walk by carnal wisdom. If such a case could be found, what discredit would it bring upon our Holy Leader and Captain. But I am certain no such instance will be found in you, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Have you not up till now found your Lord to be a compassionate and generous friend to you, and has not simple faith in him given you all the peace your spirit could desire? I pray you, then, unless you would stain his glory in the dust, as you have received Christ, so walk in him.

Besides, *what reason have you to make a change?* Has there been any argument in *the past?* Has not Christ proved himself all-sufficient! He appeals to you to-day—"Have I been a wilderness unto you?" When your soul has simply trusted Christ, have you ever been confounded? When you have dared to come as a guilty sinner and believed in him, have you ever been ashamed? Very well, then, let the past urge you to walk in him. And as for *the present,* can that compel you to leave Christ? Oh! when we are hard beset with this world or with the severer trials within the Church, we find it such a sweet thing to come back and pillow our head upon the bosom of our Saviour. This is the joy we have to-day, that we are in him, that we are saved in him, and if we find this to-day to be enough, wherefore should we think of changing! I will not forswear the sunlight till I find a better, nor leave my Lord until a brighter Lover shall appear; and, since this can never be, I will hold him with a grasp immortal, and bind his name as a seal upon my arm. As for *the future,* can you suggest anything which can arise that shall render it necessary for you to tack about, or strike sail, or go with another captain in another ship? I think not. Suppose life to be long—He changes not. Suppose you die; is it not written that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" You are poor; what better than to have Christ who can make you rich in faith? Suppose you are sick; what more do you want than Christ to make your bed in your sickness? Suppose you should be maltreated, and mocked at, and slandered for his sake—what better do you want than to have him as a friend who sticketh closer than a brother? In life, in death, in judgment, you cannot conceive anything that can arise in which you would require more than Christ bestows.

But, dear friends, it may be that you are tempted by something else to change your course for a time. Now what is it? Is it the wisdom of this world, the cunning devices and discoveries of man? Is it that which our apostle mentions as philosophy? The wise men of the world have persuaded you to begin questioning; they have urged you to put the mysteries of God to the test of common-sense, reason, and so forth, as they call it, and not lean on the inspiration of God's Word. Ah! well, beloved, it is wisdom, I suppose, which philosophy offers you.

Well, but have you not that in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? You received Christ at first, I thought, as being made of God unto you wisdom, and sanctification, and righteousness, and so on; well, will you cast him off when you have already more than all the wisdom which this philosophy offers?

Is it *ceremonies* that tempt you? Has the priest told you that you ought to attend to these, and then you would have another ground of confidence? Well, but you have that in Christ. If there is anything in the circumcision of the Jews, you have that, for you are circumcised in him. If there be anything in baptism, as some think that to be a saving ordinance, you have been buried with him in baptism; you have that. Do you want life? your life is hid with him. Do you want death? You are dead with Christ, and buried with him. Do you want resurrection? he hath raised you up with him. Do you want heaven? he hath make you sit together in heavenly places in him. Getting Christ, you have all that everything else can offer you; therefore be not tempted from this hope of your calling, but as ye have received Christ, so walk in him.

And then, further, do you not know this? that your Jesus is the Lord from heaven? *What can your heart desire* beyond God? God is infinite; you cannot want more than the infinite. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Having Christ you have God, and having God you have everything. Well might the apostle add to that sentence, "And ye are complete in him!" Well, then, if you are complete in Christ, why should you be beguiled by the bewitcheries of this world to want something besides Christ? If resting upon him, God is absolutely yours, and you are, therefore, full to the brim with all that your largest capacity can desire, oh! wherefore should you thus be led astray, like foolish children, to seek after another confidence and another trust? Oh! come back, thou wanderer; come thou back to this solid foundation, and sing once again with us—

> "On Christ the solid rock I stand,
> All other ground is sinking sand."

III. And now, last of all, a few words BY WAY OF APPLICATION.

"So walk ye in him." One of the first applications shall be made with regard to some who complain of a want of communion, or rather, of those of whom WE ought to complain, since they injure us all by their distance from Christ. There are some of you who never have much communion with Christ. You are members of the Church, and very decent people, I dare say, in your way; but you do not have communion with Christ. Ask some professors—"Do you ever have communion with Christ?" They would be obliged to say—"Well, I do not know that my life is inconsistent; I do not think anybody could blame me for any wrong act towards my fellow-man; but if you come to that, whether I have ever had communion with Christ, I am compelled to say that I have had it now and then, but it is very seldom; it is like the angels' visits, few and far between." Now, brethren, you have received Christ, have you not? Then the application of the

principle is, as you have received him, so walk in him. If it were worth while for you to come to him at first, then it is worth while for you always to keep to him. If it were really a safe thing for you to come to him and say, "Jesus, thou art the way," then it is a safe thing for thee to do now; and if that was the foundation of blessedness to thee, to come simply to Christ, then it will be the fountain of blessedness to thee to do the same now. Come, then, to him *now*. If thou wert foolish in trusting him at the first, then thou art wise in leaving off doing so now. If thou wert wise, however, in approaching to Christ years gone by, thou art foolish in not standing by Christ now. Come, then, let the remembrance of thy marriage unto the Lord Jesus rebuke thee; and if thou hast lost thy fellowship with Jesus, come again to his dear body wounded for thy sake, and say, "Lord Jesus, help me from this time forth as I have received thee, day by day to walk in thee."

There are many of you who complain of *a want of comfort*. You are not so comfortable as you would like to be, and why? Why you have sinned. Yes, yes, but how did you receive Christ. As a saint? "No, no," say you, "I came to Christ as a sinner." Come to him as a sinner now, then. "Oh! but I feel so guilty." Just so, but what was your hope at first? Why, that guilty though you were, he had made an atonement, and you trusted in him. Well, you are guilty still; do the same as you did at first; walk in him, and I cannot imagine a person without comfort who continually makes this the strain of his life, to rest on Christ as a poor sinner, just as he did at first. Why, Lord, thou knowest the devil often says to me, "Thou art no saint." Well then if I be not a saint, yet I am a sinner, and it is written "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Then

> "Just as I am, and waiting not,
> To rid my soul of one foul spot,
> To him whose blood can cleanse each blot,
> O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Why, you cannot help having comfort if you walk with your Surety and Substitute as you did at the first, resting on Him, and not in feelings, nor experience, nor graces, nor anything of your own; living and resting alone on him who is made of God unto you all that your soul requires.

There is yet another thing. There are many Christians whose lives really *are not consistent*. I cannot understand this if they are walking in Christ; in fact, if a man could completely walk in Christ he would walk in perfect holiness. We hear an instance, perhaps, of a little shopkeeper who puffs and exaggerates as other shopkeepers do—he does not exactly tell a lie, but something very near it. Now I want to know whether that man was walking in Christ when he did that. If he had said to himself, "Now I am in Christ," do you think he would have done it? We hear of another who is constantly impatient, always troubled, fretting, mournful. I want to know whether that man is really walking in Christ as he walked at first, when he is doubting the goodness, the providence, the tenderness of God. Surely he is not. I have heard of hard-hearted professors who take a Christian brother by the throat with, "Pay me what thou owest." Do you think they are walking in Christ when they do that? We hear

of others, when their brothers have need, shut up the bowels of their compassion; are mean and stingy; are they walking in Christ when they do that? Why, if a man walks in Christ, then he so acteth as Christ would act; for Christ being in him, his hope, his love, his joy, his life, he is the reflex of the image of Christ; he is the glass into which Christ looks; and then the image of Christ is reflected, and men say of that man, "He is like his Master; he lives in Christ." Oh! I know, dear brethren, if we lived now as we did the first day we came to Christ, we should live very differently from what we do. How we felt towards him that day! We would have given all we had for him! How we felt towards sinners that day! Lad that I was, I wanted to preach, and

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I had found."

How we felt towards God that day! When we were on our knees what pleading there was with him, what a nearness of access to him in prayer! Oh! how different; how different with some now! This world has with rude hand brushed the bloom from the young fruit. Is it true that flowers of grace, like the flowers of nature, die in the autumn of our piety? As we all get older, ought we to be more worldly? Should it be that our early love, which was the love of our espousals, dies away? Forgive, O Lord, this evil, and turn us anew unto thee.

"Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
We hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from our breast.

The dearest idol we have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help us to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

So shall our walk be close with God,
Calm and serene our frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads us to the Lamb."

"As ye have received him walk in him," and if ye have not received him, oh! poor sinner, remember he is free and full, full to give thee all thou needest, and free to give it even to thee. Let the verse we sung be an invitation to thee:

"This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear;
The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here:
Come, needy and guilty; come, loathsome and bare;
Though leprous and filthy, come just as you are.

Trust in God's anointed—that is receive him—and then, having trusted him, continue still to trust him. May his Spirit enable you to do it, and to his name shall be glory for ever and ever.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD,—THE LIBERATOR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14TH, 1862, BY

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord looseth the prisoners."—Psalm cxlvi. 7.

WHEN preaching last Tuesday in Dover, the mayor of the town very courteously lent the ancient town-hall for the service, and in passing along to reach a private entrance, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level than the great hall. These belonged to the prison cells where persons committed for offences within the jurisdiction of the borough were confined. It at once struck me as a singular combination, that we should be preaching the gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the law beneath us. Perhaps when we sang praises to God, the prisoners, like those who were in the same jail with Paul and Silas, heard us; but the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loose their bonds. Alas! what a picture is this of many in our congregations. We preach liberty to the captives; we proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; but how many remain year after year in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin. We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas! their hearts are unused to gratitude. Some of them are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others of them are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found. Let us breathe a prayer at the commencement of the sermon this morning, "Lord, break the fetters, and set free the captives. Glorify thyself this morning by proving thyself to be Jehovah, who looseth the prisoners."

The little circumstance which I have mentioned, fixed itself in my mind, and in my private meditations it thrust itself upon me. My thoughts ran somewhat in an allegory, until I gave imagination its full rein and bid her bear me at her will. In my day-dream I thought that some angelic warder was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison, and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me ever and anon as I looked sorrowful, that "Jehovah looseth the prisoners." What I thought of, I will now tell out to you. The dress of the sermon may be metaphorical; but my only aim is to utter comforting, substantial truth; and may the

Master grant that some of you who have been in these prisons, as I have been, may this day come out of them, and rejoice that the Lord has loosed you.

I. The first cell to which I went, and to which I shall conduct you, is called *the common prison*. In this common prison, innumerable souls are shut up. It were useless to attempt to count them; they are legion; their number is ten thousand times ten thousand. This is the ward of SIN. All the human race have been prisoners here; and those who this day are perfectly at liberty, once wore the heavy chain, and were immured within the black walls of this enormous prison. I stepped into it, and to my surprise, instead of hearing, as I had expected, notes of mourning and lament, I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter. The mirth was boisterous and obstreporous. The profane were cursing and blaspheming; others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals, and saw sparkling gaiety: their aspect was rather that of wedding-guests than prisoners. Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free, and when I spoke to them of their prison-house, and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, "We were born free, and were never in bondage unto any man." They bade me prove my words; and when I pointed to the irons on their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved; it was only my dull and sombre mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains. There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free-livers, while others whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks, cried out to me, that they were free-thinkers. Truly, I had never seen such bond-slaves in my life before, nor any so fast manacled as these; but ever did I mark as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free, and those who were in the darkest part of the dungeon, thought they had most light, and those whom I considered to be the most wretched, and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth. I looked with sorrow; but as I looked, I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the shining one. He went out, and I knew, for I had read the text—"The Lord looseth the prisoners," I knew that the prisoner had been loosed from the house of bondage. But I noted that as he went forth his late bond-fellows laughed and pointed with the finger, and called him sniveller, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all ill names, until the prison walls rang and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched, and saw the mysterious visitant touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared. The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad; that they were become slaves, or miserable fanatics, whereas I knew that they were gone to be free for ever; emancipated from every bond. What struck me most was, that the prisoners who were touched with the finger of delivering love were frequently the worst of the whole crew. I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping

out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all, but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken, and I remembered that I had somewhere in an old book read these words—"The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you." As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress which they had worn before, but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures. They began to talk with their fellow-prisoners; and, oh! how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had; that yonder door would open, and that they might escape. They pleaded with their fellow-men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake. At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, "Let us be free." But no; the more these men pleaded the harder the others seemed to grow, and, indeed, I found it so when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. Wherever the finger of the shining one was felt our pleadings easily prevailed; but save and except in those who were thus touched by the heavenly messenger all our exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and we left that den of iniquity crying, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then I was cast into a muse, as I considered what a marvel of mercy it was that I myself should be free; for well do I remember when I spurned every invitation of love; when I hugged my chains, dreamed my prison garb to be a royal robe, and took the meals of the prison, called the pleasures of sin, and relished them as sweet, yea, dainty morsels, fit for princes. How it came to pass that sovereign grace should have set me free I cannot tell; only this I know, I will sing for ever, while I live and when I die, that "The Lord looseth the prisoners." Our gracious God knoweth how to bring us up out from among the captives of sin, set our feet in the way of righteousness and liberty, make us his people, and keep us so for ever. Alas! how many have I now before me who are prisoners in this common prison?

"Oh! sovereign grace, their hearts subdue;
May they be freed from bondage too;
As willing followers of the Lord,
Brought forth to freedom by his word."

II. I asked the guide where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free; but that before their complete gaol deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led me thither. It was called *the solitary cell.* I had heard much of the solitary system, and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—"PENITENCE," and when I opened it I found it so clean and white, and withal so sweet and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a house of prayer than a prison, and my guide told me that

indeed so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast made it a prison at all. When once that door was open the place became so dear an oratory, that those who were once prisoners therein were wont to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long. He even told me that one was heard to say when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was, that in heaven there would be no cell of penitence. Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms; Peter also wept bitterly here; and the woman who was a sinner here washed the feet of her Lord. But this time I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation; but he learned that he must be saved alone if saved at all. He had been accustomed aforetime to go up to the house of God in company, and thought that going there was enough; but now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threatening smote his conscience. I remembered to have read a passage in the same old book I quoted just now—"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. And the land shall mourn, every family *apart;* the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned full oft, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances some words of unbelief. Alas! were it not for these, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges. 'Twas unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell I say it had been an oratory for heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation. As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophecied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly, and destroyed his soul eternally. How foolish his fears were all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it there was a shining one standing ready outside who would open the door at once; yea, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called *faith*, and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open. Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts thereof the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open, and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin, and cleansed him

for ever from all iniquity. So I spoke to this penitent, and bade him trust in the blood, and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner; but this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, 'tis the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

III. I passed away from that cell, though I would have been content to linger there, and I halted at another; this, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as heavy and as ponderous as the former. I heard the warder coming, and when he opened the door for me it grated horribly upon its hinges, and disturbed the silence, for this time I was come into *the silent cell*. The wretch confined here was one who said he *could not pray*. If he could pray he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, weeping because he could not pray. All he could tell me, as his eyeballs rolled in agony, was this—"I would, but cannot, pray; I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word, my guilt has smitten me dumb." Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing; all was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary miserere of sighs and groans. Verily thought I this is a sad and singular case, yet I remember when I was in that cell myself I did not think it strange. I thought that the heavens were brass above me, and that if I cried never so earnestly the Lord would shut out my prayer. I durst not pray, I was too guilty, and when I did dare to pray 'twas hardly prayer, for I had no hope of being heard. "No," I said, "it is presumption; I must not plead with him;" and when at times I would have prayed, I could not; something choked all utterance, and the spirit could only lament, and long, and pant, and sigh to be able to pray. I know that some of you have been in this prison, and while I am talking to you this morning you will remember it, and bless God for deliverance. Perhaps some of you are in it now, and though I say I think your case is very strange, it will not seem so to you. But do you know, there was a little table in this cell, and on the table lay a key of promise, inscribed with choice words. I am sure the key would unlock the prison-door, and if the prisoner had possessed skill to use it; he might have made his escape at once. This was the key, and these were the words thereon—"The Lord looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans; if he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from heaven, with this purpose, that he may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man's broken heart and set him free; for though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it has prayed, and it shall prevail. I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and I talked to him, though he would not speak with me. I reminded him that the book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus had taught to speak, and I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly too. I turned to the book of Jonah, and read him these words,—"Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me."

I quoted the words of Elias, "Go again seven times." I told him that the Lord needed no fine language, for misery is the best argument for mercy, and our wounds the best mouths to speak to God's ear. Besides, I told him we have an Advocate with the Father who openeth his mouth for the dumb, so that those who cannot speak for themselves have one to speak for them. I told the man that whether he could pray or not he was bidden to look at the blood-marks over his door; that the publican was justified by the blood, though he could only cry "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I pleaded with him to receive the Lord's own testimony, that the Lord Jesus is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him," that he waited to be gracious, and was a God ready to pardon; but after all, I felt that the Lord alone must loose his prisoners. O, gracious God, loose them now!

IV. We had not time to stay long at any one place, so we hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! 'Twas dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called *the cell of ignorance.* I groped as a blind man gropeth for the wall. I was guided by my ear by sobs and moans to a spot where there knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light, but I marvelled why this place should be darker than the rest, only I recollected to have read of some that sat "in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light *to him.* I felt for one of the ancient lightholes, but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness; I touched it with my hand and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the doctrines of grace which had greatly perplexed him; it was called *Election.* He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine, but since God had chosen his people, and he felt persuaded that he had not chosen him, he was lost for ever, since if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy. I went up to that window and pulled out some handfuls of rags; filthy rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening; caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of divine sovereignty. As I pulled out these rags, light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, "It is a mercy for thee that there is such a doctrine as election, for if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for thee; salvation must either be by God's will or by man's merit; if it were by man's merit, thou wouldest never be saved, but since it is by God's will, and he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, there is no reason why he should not have mercy on thee, even though thou mayest be the chief of sinners. Meanwhile he bids thee believe in his Son Jesus, and gives thee his divine word for it, that "Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." The little light thus shed upon the poor man

led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called—*The Fall*—or *Human Depravity*. The man said, "Oh, there is no hope for me for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceeding vile; there is no hope for me." I pulled the rags out of this window too, and I said to him, "Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you are lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty." He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through and seen my Master's glory by its means; it was the doctrine of *Particular Redemption*. "Ah!" said he, "suppose Christ has not redeemed me with his precious blood! Suppose he has never bought me with his death!" I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskilful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth *us* from all sin." "Ah!" he said, "but suppose I am not one of the 'us!'" I told him that he that believeth and trusteth Christ, is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved. I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence; but a ransom which did redeem all believers, who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them; that the truth had been misrepresented to him, and he had heard the doctrines of grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide who had led him into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened and the man could see, he saw written over the door, "Believe and live!" and in the new light which he had found he trusted his Lord and Saviour, and walked out free, and marvelled that he had been so long a slave. I marvelled not, but I thought in my heart how accursed are those teachers who hide the light from the eyes of men so that they understand not the way of life. Ignorant souls, who know not the plan of salvation, will have many sorrows, which they might escape by instruction. Study your Bibles well; be diligent in attending upon a free-grace ministry; labour after a clear apprehension of the plan of salvation, and it will often please God that when you come to understand his truth your spirits will receive comfort, for it is by the truth that "the Lord looseth the prisoners."

V. I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle, and a huge cannon-ball fixed to it—a military punishment they said for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This *clog of habit* troubled the prisoner much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavouring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence thereon; but these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warder told me that this was the chain of *Habit*, and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off,

and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison; the door of unbelief must be opened, and they must trust in the one great deliverer the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors; after that, upon the anvil of grace with the hammer of love, their fetters could be broken off. I stayed awhile, and I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning grace. He had aforetime laboured to escape from his drunkenness, but some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood and he became a Christian, and becoming a Christian he could no more love his cups; at one stroke of the hammer the ball was gone for ever. Another was a swearer; he knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ, and then he never blasphemed again, for that foul thing was abhorred. I noticed some, and methinks I am one of them myself, although they had the ball taken away, yet on their hands there were the remains of old chains. Like Paul, in another case, when we rejoice in all things we have to say, "Except these bonds." Once we were chained both hands together; the divine hammer has smitten off the connecting links, but still some one or two are left hanging there. Ah! often has that link made me cry out—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Though I am free, yet still the iron clings to its hold, and will hang there till I die. "When I would do good evil is present with me." O that old Adam nature, the corrupt flesh, would God we were rid of it! Blessed be the Lord, as the pulse begins to beat high with heaven's glory, the band will burst, and we shall be perfect for ever. There is no way of getting rid of the links of old habits but by leaving the prison of unbelief and coming to Christ, then the evil habits are renounced as a necessary consequence though the temptation will remain. Though sometimes we have to feel a link of the chain, it is a subject of unbounded thankfulness that the link is not fastened to the staple. We may sometimes feel it dragging behind, enough to trip us up, so that we cannot run in the path of obedience as swiftly as we would, but it is not in the staple now. The bird can fly; though there be a remnant of its cord about its foot it mounts up to heaven, singing its song of praise. The Lord must loose prisoners from their evil habits. He *can* do it; a drop of Jesu's blood can eat the iron all away, and the file of his agonies can cut through the chain of long-acquired sins, and make us free. "The Lord looseth the prisoners."

VI. I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labour for them. In the prison I went to see in my reverie there was a *hard-labour room*. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people; they held their heads very high, and would not bend; they were birds with fine feathers, and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined, but being in durance vile, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty. They had saved up a few

old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could by-and-bye set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing, and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a tread-wheel; they were going to the stars they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might; but though they had been labouring for years, and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies. Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs; they were turning wheels, and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing they wrought on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place a company laboured to build houses of sand, and when they had built up to some height the foundation always yielded, but they renewed their efforts, for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavouring to make wedding garments out of fig-leaves, by sewing them together, but the fig-leaves were of a sort that were shrivelled every night, so that they had to begin the next morning their hopeless toil. Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well, the veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked amain without result. As they laboured, like Samson when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thonged whip called *the Law*, the terrible Law—each lash being a commandment, and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners; yet still they kept on work, work, work, and would not turn to the door of grace to find escape. I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies; and there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die, but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more, and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit; then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a shining spirit, and carried out of the prison and made free for ever. Then I thought within myself, "Surely, surely, these are proud self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by grace, 'therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.'" I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison-house to bring them to Jesus; yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage and would not escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words—"By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified;" and to these other words, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." I had seen enough of that prison-house, for I recollect being there myself, and I have some of the scars upon my spirit now. I desire not to go back to it, but as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord so would I walk in Him, knowing that if the Son make me free I shall be free indeed.

VII. We must not leave these corridors till we have peered into all the cells; for we may not come here again. As I passed along, there was another cell, called *The Low Dungeon of Despondency.* I had read of this in the book of Jeremiah—a pit wherein there was no water, of which the prophet said, "He hath led me and brought me into darkness and not into light." I looked down. It was a deep, dark, doleful place; down in it I saw by the gloomy light of the warder's lantern a poor soul in very deep distress, and I bade him speak to me, and tell me his case. He said he had been a great offender, and he knew it; he had been convinced of sin; he had heard the gospel preached, and sometimes he thought it was for him, but at other times he felt sure it was not; there were seasons when his spirit could lay hold of Christ, but there were times when he dared not hope. Now and then, he said, some gleams of light did come; once a week when he had his provision sent down, a little fresh bread and water, he did feel a little encouraged, but by the time the Monday came—for his provision was always sent down on Sunday—he felt himself as low and miserable as ever. I called out to him that there was a ladder up the side of the prison and if he would but climb it, he might escape, but the poor soul could not feel the steps. I reminded him that he need not be where he was, for a divine hand had let down ropes to draw him up, with soft cushions for his armholes; but I seemed as one that mocked him, and I heard some that tormented him bid him call me "liar." These were two villains called Mistrust and Timorous, who were bent upon keeping him here, even though they knew that he was an heir of heaven, and had a right to liberty. Finding myself powerless, I thus learned the more fully that the Lord must loose these prisoners or else they must be prisoners for many a-day; yet it was a great comfort to recollect that no soul ever died in that dungeon if it had really felt its need of Christ, and cried for mercy through his blood. No soul ever utterly perished while it called upon the name of the Lord; it might lie in the hold till it seemed as if the moss would grow on its eye-lids, and the worms eat its mildewed corpse, but it never did perish, for in due time it was brought by simple faith to believe that Christ is "able to save, even to the uttermost," and then they come up, O how quickly, from their low dungeon, and they sing more sweetly than others—"He hath brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; he hath set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, and established my going."

VIII. Shudder not at the clinging damps, for I must take you to another dungeon deeper than this last; it is called *the inner prison.* Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, yet they sang in their prison; but in this dungeon no singing was ever heard. It is *the hold of despair.* I need not enlarge much in my description. I hope you have never been there; and I pray you never may. Ah! when a spirit once gets into that inner prison, comforts are turned at once into miseries, and the very promises of God appear to be in league for the destruction of the soul. John Bunyan describes old Giant Despair and his crab-tree cudgel better than I can do it. Sorrowful is that ear which has heard the grating of the huge iron door, and full of terror is the heart which has felt the chilly damps of that horrible pit.

Are any of you in that dungeon to-day? Do you say, "I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; my day of grace is over; I have sinned against light and knowledge; I am lost?" O man, where are you? I must have you free. What a splendid trophy of grace you will make! My Master loves to find such great sinners as you are, that he may exhibit his power to save. Oh! what a platform for my Lord to rear the standard of his love upon, when he shall have fought with you and overcome you by his love. What a victory this shall be. How will the angels sing unto him that loved the vilest of the vile, and ransomed the despairing one out of the hand of cruel foes. I have more hope of you than I have of others; for when the surgeon enters the hospital after an accident, he always goes to the worse case first. If there be a man who has broken his finger only, "Oh! let him be," say they, "he can wait;" but if there be a poor fellow who is much mangled, "Ah!" says the surgeon, "I must see to this case at once." So is it with you; but *the Lord* must loose you; I cannot. Only this I know, if you would but believe me, there is a key which will fit the lock of your door of unbelief. Come, look over this bunch of keys: "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Brother, this inner dungeon can be opened by the Lord Jesus.

"The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield."

IX. I am getting to the end of this dark story now; but tarry a moment at the grating of *the Devil's Torture Chamber*, for I have been in it; yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream; I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I do know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan's "Grace abounding," if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God; the truth of Scripture; the manhood of Christ; then his deity; and once, he says, he tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah! I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphemy in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God, till I put my hand to my mouth lest they should be uttered, and I was cast down, and cried to the merciful God that he would save me from them. Oh! the foul things which the fiend will inject into the spirit; the awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den, which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts in such hosts, and so quickly the one after the other, that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle, and though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison. Ah! well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those, for if we hate them they are none of

ours; if we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan's, and God will in due time bring us to be free from these horrors. Though the hosts of hell may have ridden over our heads, yet, let us cry "Rejoice not over me O mine enemy, though I fall yet shall I rise again." Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. "*It is written*"—"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Give your foe a deadly stab; tell him that "God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and you may yet see him spread his dragon wings and fly away. This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner, and the Lord himself must loose these prisoners.

X. Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined therein have called *the condemned cell*. I was in it once. In that room the man writes bitter things against himself; he feels absolutely sure that the wrath of God abideth on him; he wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up; he is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness; he marvels that he has his breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame. His spirit is in a dreadful state; he not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now. The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the putting-up of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the law as piece after piece was put together! It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away for ever. Oh! that condemned cell! Next to Tophet, there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience he shall never be condemned. When he is once brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out, but not to execution; led out, but not to perish, "he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, just so does God deal with poor souls; when they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God's sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain, it is then that sovereign mercy steps in and cries, "I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins; thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee."

And now, thou glorious Jehovah, the Liberator, unto thee be praises! All thy redeemed bless thee, and those who are to-day in their dungeons cry unto thee! Stretch out thy bare arm, thou mighty Deliverer! Thou who didst send thy Son Jesus to redeem by blood, send now thy Spirit to set free by power, and this day, even this day, let multitudes rejoice in the liberty wherewith thou makest free; and unto Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Israel's one Redeemer, be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NO ROOM FOR CHRIST IN THE INN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 21ST, 1862, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, d laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."—Luke ii. 7.

t was needful that it should be distinctly proven, beyond all dispute, hat our Lord sprang out of Judah. It was necessary, also, that he hould be born in Bethlehem-Ephratah, according to the word of the ord which he spake by his servant Micah. But how could a public ecognition of the lineage of an obscure carpenter and an unknown aiden be procured? What interest could the keepers of registers be upposed to take in two such humble persons? As for the second natter, Mary lived at Nazareth in Galilee, and there seemed every probability that the birth would take place there; indeed, the period of her elivery was so near that, unless absolutely compelled, she would not be ikely to undertake a long and tedious journey to the southern province f Judea. How are these two matters to be arranged? Can one turn f the wheel effect two purposes? It can be done! It shall be done! The official stamp of the Roman empire shall be affixed to the pedigree f the coming Son of David, and Bethlehem shall behold his nativity. A little tyrant, Herod, by some show of independent spirit, offends the greater tyrant, Augustus. Augustus informs him that he shall no onger treat him as a friend, but as a vassal; and albeit Herod makes he most abject submission, and his friends at the Roman court intercede for him, yet Augustus, to show his displeasure, orders a census to be taken of all the Jewish people, in readiness for a contemplated taxation, which, however, was not carried out till some ten years after. Even the winds and waves are not more fickle than a tyrant's will; but the Ruler of tempests knoweth how to rule the perverse spirits of princes. The Lord our God has a bit for the wildest war horse, and a hook for the most terrible leviathan. Autocratical Cæsars are but puppets moved with invisible strings, mere drudges to the King of kings. Augustus must be made offended with Herod; he is constrained to tax the people; it is imperative that a census be taken; nay, it is of necessity that inconvenient, harsh, and tyrannical regulations should be published, and every person must repair to the town to which he was reputed to belong; thus, Mary is brought to Bethlehem, Jesus Christ is born as appointed, and, moreover, he is recognised officially as being

descended from David by the fact that his mother came to Bethlehem as being of that lineage, remained there, and returned to Galilee without having her claims questioned, although the jealousy of all the women of the clan would have been aroused had an intruder ventured to claim a place among the few females to whom the birth of Messias was now by express prophecies confined. Remark here the wisdom of a God of providence, and believe that all things are ordered well.

When all persons of the house of David were thus driven to Bethlehem, the scanty accommodation of the little town would soon be exhausted. Doubtless friends entertained their friends till their houses were all full, but Joseph had no such willing kinsmen in the town. There was the caravanserai, which was provided in every village, where free accommodation was given to travellers; this, too, was full, for coming from a distance, and compelled to travel slowly, the humble couple had arrived late in the day. The rooms within the great brick square were already occupied with families; there remained no better lodging, even for a woman in travail, than one of the meaner spaces appropriated to beasts of burden. The stall of the ass was the only place where the child could be born. By hanging a curtain at its front, and perhaps tethering the animal on the outer side to block the paassge, the needed seclusion could be obtained, and here, in the stable, was the King of Glory born, and in the manger was he laid.

My business this morning is to lead your meditations to the stable at Bethlehem, that you may see this great sight—the Saviour in the manger, and think over the reason for this lowly couch—"because there was no room for them in the inn."

I. I shall commence by remarking that THERE WERE OTHER REASONS WHY CHRIST SHOULD BE LAID IN THE MANGER.

1. I think it was intended thus *to show forth his humiliation*. He came, according to prophecy, to be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" he was to be "without form or comeliness," "a root out of a dry ground." Would it have been fitting that the man who was to die naked on the cross should be robed in purple at his birth? Would it not have been inappropriate that the Redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb should be born anywhere but in the humblest shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manner? The manger and the cross standing at the two extremities of the Saviour's earthly life seem most fit and congruous the one to the other. He is to wear through life a peasant's garb; he is to associate with fishermen; the lowly are to be his disciples; the cold mountains are often to be his only bed; he is to say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head;" nothing, therefore, could be more fitting than that in his season of humiliation, when he laid aside all his glory, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and condescended even to the meanest estate, he should be laid in a manger.

2. By being in a manger *he was declared to be the king of the poor*. They, doubtless, were at once able to recognise his relationship to them, from the position in which they found him. I believe it excited feelings of the tenderest brotherly kindness in the minds of the shepherds, when

the angel said—"This shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger." In the eyes of the poor, imperial robes excite no affection, but a man in their own garb attracts their confidence. With what pertinacity will working-men cleave to a leader of their own order, believing in him because he knows their toils, sympathizes in their sorrows, and feels an interest in all their concerns. Great commanders have readily won the hearts of their soldiers by sharing their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks. The King of Men who was born in Bethlehem, was not exempted in his infancy from the common calamities of the poor, nay, his lot was even worse than theirs. I think I hear the shepherds comment on the manger-birth, "Ah!" said one to his fellow, "then he will not be like Herod the tyrant; he will remember the manger and feel for the poor; poor helpless infant, I feel a love for him even now, what miserable accommodation this cold world yields its Saviour; it is not a Cæsar that is born to-day; he will never trample down our fields with his armies, or slaughter our flocks for his courtiers, he will be the poor man's friend, the people's monarch; according to the words of our shepherd-king, he shall judge the poor of the people; he shall save the children of the needy." Surely the shepherds, and such as they—the poor of the earth, perceived at once that here was the plebeian king; noble in descent, but still as the Lord hath called him, "one chosen out of the people." Great Prince of Peace! the manger was thy royal cradle! Therein wast thou presented to all nations as Prince of our race, before whose presence there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but thou art Lord of all. Kings, your gold and silver would have been lavished on him if ye had known the Lord of Glory, but inasmuch as ye knew him not he was declared with demonstration to be a leader and a witness to the people. The things which are not, under him shall bring to nought the things that are, and the things that are despised which God hath chosen, shall under his leadership break in pieces the might, and pride, and majesty of human grandeur.

3. Further, in thus being laid in a manger, he did, as it were, *give an invitation to the most humble to come to him.* We might tremble to approach a throne, but we cannot fear to approach a manger. Had we seen the Master at first riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem with garments laid in the way, and the palm-branches strewed, and the people crying, "Hosanna!" we might have thought, though even the thought would have been wrong, that he was not approachable. Even there, riding upon a colt the foal of an ass, he was so meek and lowly, that the young children clustered about him with their boyish "Hosanna!" Never could there be a being more approachable than Christ. No rough guards pushed poor petitioners away; no array of officious friends were allowed to keep off the importunate widow or the man who clamoured that his son might be made whole; the hem of his garment was always trailing where sick folk could reach it, and he himself had a hand always ready to touch the disease, an ear to catch the faintest accents of misery, a soul going forth everywhere in rays of mercy, even as the light of the sun streams on every side beyond that orb itself. By being laid in a manger he proved himself a priest taken from among men, one who has suffered like his brethren, and therefore

can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Of him it was said "He doth eat and drink with publicans and sinners;" "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Even as an infant, by being laid in a manger, he was set forth as the sinner's friend. Come to him, ye that are weary and heavy-laden! Come to him, ye that are broken in spirit, ye who are bowed down in soul! Come to him, ye that despise yourselves and are despised of others! Come to him, publican and harlot! Come to him, thief and drunkard! In the manger there he lies, unguarded from your touch and unshielded from your gaze. Bow the knee, and kiss the Son of God; accept him as your Saviour, for he puts himself into that manger that you may approach him. The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you.

4. Methinks there was yet another mystery. You remember, brethren, that this place was *free to all;* it was an inn, and please to remember the inn in this case was not like our hotels, where accommodation and provision must be paid for. In the early and simple ages of the world every man considered it an honour to entertain a stranger; afterwards, as travelling became more common, many desired to shift the honour and pleasure upon their neighbours; wherefore should they engross all the dignity of hospitality? Further on still, some one person was appointed in each town and village, and was expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest; but, as the ages grew less simple, and the pristine glow of brotherly love cooled down, the only provision made was the erection of a huge square block, arranged in rooms for the travellers, and with lower stages for the beasts, and here, with a certain provision of water and in some cases chopped straw for the cattle, the traveller must make himself as comfortable as he could. He had not to purchase admittance to the caravanserai, for it was free to all, and the stable especially so. Now, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free he his to all comers. The Gospel is preached to every creature and shuts out none. We may say of the invitations of Holy Scripture,

"None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.

Though Jesus' grace can save the prince,
The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a just pretence
To perish in despair."

Class exclusions are unknown here, and the prerogatives of caste are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable; it cannot be an offence to enter the stable of a public caravanserai. So, if you desire to come to Christ you may come to him just as you are; you may come *now*. Whosoever among you hath the desire in his heart to trust Christ is free to do it. Jesus is free to you; he will receive you; he will welcome you with gladness, and to show this, I think, the young child was cradled in a manger. We know that sinners often imagine that they are shut out. Oftentimes the convicted conscience will write bitter things against itself and deny its part and lot in mercy's stores. Brother, if *God* hath not shut thee out, do not shut thyself out. Until thou canst find it written in the Book that thou mayest not trust Christ; till thou canst quote a positive passage in which it is written that he is not able to save thee, I pray thee take that other word wherein it is written—"He is able to save unto the

uttermost them that come unto God by him." Venture on that promise: come to Christ in the strength and faith of it, and thou shalt find him free to all comers.

5. We have not yet exhausted the reasons why the Son of Man was laid in a manger. It was at the manger that *the beasts were fed;* and does the Saviour lie where weary beasts receive their provender, and shall there not be a mystery here? Alas, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own consciences every thing manlike has departed, but even to such the remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply. We are constantly reading in our papers of men who are called incorrigible, and it is fashionable just now to demand ferociously, that these men should be treated with unmingled severity. Some few years ago all the world went mad with a spurious humanity, crying out that gentleness would reform the brutal thief whom harsh punishments would harden hopelessly; now the current has turned, and everybody is demanding the abandonment of the present system. I am no advocate for treating criminals daintily; let their sin bring them a fair share of smart; but if by any means they can be reformed, pray let the means be tried. The day will come when the paroxysm of this garrotting fever is over, we shall blush to think that we were frightened by silly fears into a dangerous interference with a great and good work which hitherto has been successfully carried on. It is a fact that under the present system, which (abating some faults that it may be well to cure) is an admirable one, crime is growing less frequent, and the class of gross offenders has been materially lessened. Whereas in 1844 18,490 convicts were transported, in 1860 the corresponding number was 11,533, and that notwithstanding the increase of the population. The ticket-of-leave system, when the public would employ the convicts and so give them a chance of gaining a new character, worked so well that little more than one per cent. in a year were re-convicted, and even now only five per cent. per annum are found returning to crime and to prison. Well, now, if the five per cent. receive no good, or even become worse, ought we not to consider the other ninety-five, and pause awhile before we give loose to our vengeance and exchange a Christian system of hopeful mercy for the old barbarous rule of unmitigated severity. Beware, fellow-citizens, beware of restoring the old idea that men can sin beyond hope of reformation, or you will generate criminals worse than those which now trouble us. The laws of Draco must ever be failures, but fear not for the ultimate triumph of plans which a Christian spirit has suggested. I have wandered from the subject,—I thought I might save some from the crime of opposing true philanthropy on account of a sudden panic; but I will return at once to the manger and the babe. I believe our Lord was laid in the manger where the beasts were fed, to show *that even beast-like men may come to him and live.* No creature can be so degraded that Christ cannot lift it up. Fall it may, and seem to fall most certainly to hell, but the long and strong arm of Christ can reach it even in its most desperate degradation; he can bring it up from apparently hopeless ruin. If there be one who has strolled in here this morning whom society abhors, and who abhors himself, my Master in the stable with the beasts presents himself as able to save the vilest

of the vile, and to accept the worst of the worst even now. Believe on him and he will make thee a new creature.

6. But as Christ was laid where beasts were fed, you will please to recollect that after he was gone *beasts fed there again.* It was only his presence which could glorify the manger, and here we learn that if Christ were taken away *the world would go back to its former heathen darkness.* Civilisation itself would die out, at least that part of it which really civilises man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished. If Christ were taken away from the human heart, the most holy would become debased again, and those who claim kinship with angels would soon prove that they have relationship to devils. The manger, I say, would be a manger for beasts still, if the Lord of Glory were withdrawn, and we should go back to our sins and our lusts if Christ should once take away his grace and leave us to ourselves. For these reasons which I have mentioned, methinks, Christ was laid in a manger.

II. But still the text says that he was laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn, and this leads us to the second remark, THAT THERE WERE OTHER PLACES BESIDES THE INN WHICH HAD NO ROOM FOR CHRIST.

The palaces of emperors and the halls of kings afforded the royal stranger no refuge? Alas! my brethren, seldom is there room for Christ in palaces! How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace, and they delight in war! He breaks their bows and cuts their spears in sunder; he burneth their war-chariots in the fire. How could kings accept the humble Saviour? They love grandeur and pomp, and he is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenter's son, and the fisherman's companion. How can princes find room for the new-born monarch? Why he teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the knavish tricks of politics and the grasping designs of ambition. O great ones of the earth, I am but little astonished that amid your glories, and pleasures, and wars, and councils, ye forget the Anointed, and cast out the Lord of All. There is no room for Christ with the kings. Look throughout the kingdoms of the earth now, and with here and there an exception it is still true—"The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed." In heaven we shall see here and there a monarch; but ah! how few; indeed a child might write them. "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." State-chambers, cabinets, throne-rooms, and royal palaces, are about as little frequented by Christ as the jungles and swamps of India by the cautious traveller. He frequents cottages far more often than regal residences, for there is no room for Jesus Christ in regal halls.

"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine he turns his eyes
From towers of haughty kings.

He bids his awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
With pleasure in his eyes."

But there were *senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws,* was there no room for Christ there? Alas! my brethren, none, and to this day there is very little room for Christ in parliaments. How seldom is

religion recognised by politicians! Of course a State-religion, if it will consent to be a poor, tame, powerless thing, a lion with its teeth all drawn, its mane all shaven off, and its claws all trimmed—yes, that may be recognised; but the true Christ and they that follow him and dare to obey his laws in an evil generation, what room is there for such? Christ and his gospel—oh! this is sectarianism, and is scarcely worthy of the notice of contempt. Who pleads for Jesus in the senate? Is not his religion, under the name of sectarianism, the great terror of all parties? Who quotes his golden rule as a direction for prime ministers, or preaches Christ-like forgiveness as a rule for national policy? One or two will give him a good word, but if it be put to the vote whether the Lord Jesus should be obeyed or no, it will be many a day before the *ayes* have it. Parties, policies, place-hunters, and pleasure-seekers exclude the Representative of Heaven from a place among representatives of Earth.

Might there not be found some room for Christ *in what is called good society?* Were there not in Bethlehem some people that were very respectable, who kept themselves aloof from the common multitude; persons of reputation and standing—could not they find room for Christ? Ah! dear friends, it is too much the case that there is no room for Him in what is called good society. There is room for all the silly little forms by which men choose to trammel themselves; room for the vain niceties of etiquette; room for frivolous conversation; room for the adoration of the body; there is room for the setting up of this and that as the idol of the hour, but there is too little room for Christ, and it is far from fashionable to follow the Lord fully. The advent of Christ would be the last thing which gay society would desire; the very mention of his name by the lips of love would cause a strange sensation. Should you begin to talk about the things of Christ in many a circle, you would be tabooed at once. "I will never ask that man to my house again," so-and-so would say—"if he must bring his religion with him." Folly and finery, rank and honour, jewels and glitter, frivolity and fashion, all report that there is no room for Jesus in their abodes.

But is there not room for him *on the exchange?* Cannot he be taken to the marts of commerce? Here are the shop-keepers of a shop-keeping nation—is there not room for Christ here? Ah! dear friends, how little of the spirit, and life, and doctrine of Christ can be found here! The trader finds it inconvenient to be too scrupulous; the merchant often discovers that if he is to make a fortune he must break his conscience. How many there are—well, I will not say they tell lies directly, but still, still, still—I had better say it plainly—they do lie indirectly with a vengeance. Who does not know as he rides along that there must be many liars abroad? for almost every house you see is "The cheapest house in London," which can hardly be; full sure they cannot all be cheapest! What sharp practise some indulge in! What puffery and falsehood! What cunning and sleight of hand! What woes would my Master pronounce on some of you if he looked into your shop-windows, or stood behind your counters. Bankruptcies, swindlings, frauds are so abundant that in hosts of cases there is no room for Jesus in the mart or the shop.

Then there are *the schools of the philosophers*, surely they will entertain him. The wise men will find in him incarnate wisdom; he, who as a

youth is to become the teacher of doctors, who will sit down and ask them questions and receive their answers, surely he will find room at once among the Grecian sages, and men of sense and wit will honour him. "Room for him, Socrates and Plato! Stoics and Epicurians give ye way; and you, ye teachers of Israel, vacate your seats; if there is no room for this child without your going, go; we must have him in the schools of philosophy if we put you all forth." No, dear friends, but it is not so; there is very little room for Christ in colleges and universities, very little room for him in the seats of learning. How often learning helps men to raise objections to Christ! Too often learning is the forge where the nails are made for Christ's crucifixion; too often human wit has become the artificer who has pointed the spear and made the shaft with which his heart should be pierced. We must say it, that philosophy, falsely so called, (for true philosophy, if it were handled aright, must ever be Christ's friend) philosophy, falsely so called, hath done mischief to Christ, but seldom hath it served his cause. A few with splendid talents, a few of the erudite and profound have bowed like children at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, and have been honoured in bowing there, but too many, conscious of their knowledge, stiff and stern in their conceit of wisdom, have said,—"Who is Christ, that we should acknowledge him?" They found no room for him in the schools.

But there was surely one place where he could go—it was *the Sanhedrim*, where the elders sit. Or could he not be housed in the priestly chamber where the priests assemble with the Levites. Was there not room for him in the temple or the synagogue? No, he found no shelter there; it was there, his whole life long, that he found his most ferocious enemies. Not the common multitude, but the priests were the instigators of his death; the priests moved the people to say "Not this man, but Barabbas." The priests paid out their shekels to bribe the popular voice, and then Christ was hounded to his death. Surely there ought to have been room for him in the Church of his own people; but there was not. Too often in the priestly church, when once it becomes recognised and mounts to dignity, there is no room for Christ. I allude not now to any one denomination, but take the whole sweep of Christendom, and it is strange that when the Lord comes to his own his own receives him not. The most accursed enemies of true religion have been the men who pretended to be its advocates. It is little marvel when bishops undermine the popular faith in revelation; this is neither their first nor last offence. Who burned the martyrs, and made Smithfield a field of blood, a burning fiery furnace, a great altar for the Most High God? Why, those who professed to be anointed of the Lord, whose shaven crowns had received episcopal benediction. Who put John Bunyan in prison? Who chased such men as Owen and the Puritans from their pulpits? Who harried the Covenanters upon the mountains? Who, Sirs, but the professed messengers of heaven and priests of God? Who have hunted the baptized saints in every land, and hunt them still in many a Continental state? The priests ever; the priests ever; there is no room for Christ with the prophets of Baal, the servants of Babylon. The false hirelings that are not Christ's shepherds, and love not his sheep, have ever been the most ferocious enemies of our God and of his Christ. There is no room for him where his name is chanted in solemn hymns and his image lifted up amid smoke of incense. Go where

ye will, and there is no space for the Prince of peace but with the humble and contrite spirits which by grace he prepares to yield him shelter.

III. But now for our third remark, THE INN ITSELF HAD NO ROOM FOR HIM; and this was the main reason why he must be laid in a manger.

What can we find in modern times which stands in the place of the inn? Well, there is *public sentiment free to all.* In this free land, men speak of what they like, and there is a public opinion upon every subject; and you know there is free toleration in this country to everything—permit me to say, toleration to everything but Christ. You will discover that the persecuting-spirit is now as much abroad as ever. There are still men at whom it is most fashionable to sneer. We never scoff at Christians now-a-days; we do not sneer at that respectable title, lest we should lose our own honour; we do not now-a-days, talk against the followers of Jesus under that name. No; but we have found out a way of doing it more safely. There is a pretty word of modern invention—a very pretty word—the word "*Sectarian.*" Do you know what it means? A sectarian means a true Christian; a man who can afford to keep a conscience, and does not mind suffering for it; a man who, whatever he finds to be in that old Book, believes it, and acts upon it, and is zealous for it. I believe that the men aimed at under the term, "sectarians," are the true followers of Christ, and that the sneers and jeers, and all the nonsense that you are always reading and hearing, is really aimed at the Christian, the true Christian, only he is disguised and nick-named by the word sectarian. I would give not a farthing for your religion, nay, not even the turn of a rusty nail, unless you will sometimes win that title. If God's Word be true, every atom of it, then we should act upon it; and whatsoever the Lord commandeth, we should diligently keep and obey, remembering that our Master tells us if we break one of the least of his commandments, and teach men so, we shall be least in his kingdom. We ought to be very jealous, very precise, very anxious, that even in the minutiæ of our Saviour's laws, we may obey, having our eyes up to him as the eyes of servants are to their mistresses. But if you do this, you will find you are not tolerated, and you will get the cold shoulder in society. A zealous Christian will find as truly a cross to carry now-a-days, as in the days of Simon the Cyrenian. If you will hold your tongue, if you will leave sinners to perish, if you will never endeavour to propagate your faith, if you will silence all witnessing for truth, if, in fact, you will renounce all the attributes of a Christian, if you will cease to be what a Christian must be, then the world will say, "Ah! that is right; this is the religion we like." But if you will believe, believe firmly, and if you let your belief actuate your life, and if your belief is so precious that you feel compelled to spread it, then at once you will find that there is no room for Christ even in the inn of public sentiment, where everything else is received. Be an infidel, and none will therefore treat you contemptuously; but be a Christian, and many will despise you. "There was no room for him in the inn."

How little room is there for Christ, too, *in general conversation*, which is also like an inn. We talk about many things; a man may now-a-days talk of any subject he pleases; no one can stop him and say, "There is a spy catching your words; he will report you to some central authority." Speech is very free in this land; but, ah! how

little room is there for Christ in general talk! Even on Sunday afternoon how little room there is for Christ in some professed Christian's houses. They will talk about ministers, tell queer anecdotes about them—perhaps invent a few, or, at least, garnish the old ones, and add to them, and make them a little more brilliant; they will talk about the Sunday school, or the various agencies in connection with the Church, but how little they say about Christ! And if some one should in conversation make this remark, "Could we not speak upon the Godhead and manhood, the finished work and righteousness, the ascension, or the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ," why we should see many, who even profess to be followers of Christ, who would hold up their heads and say, "Why, dear, that man is quite a fanatic, or else he would not think of introducing such a subject as that into general conversation." No, there is no room for him in the inn; to this day he can find but little access there.

I address many who are working-men. You are employed among a great many artisans day after day; do you not find, brethren—I know you do—that there is very little room for Christ *in the workshop?* There is room there for everything else; there is room for swearing; there is room for drunkenness; there is room for lewd conversation; there is room for politics, slanders, or infidelities; but there is no room for Christ. Too many of our working men think religion would be an incumbrance, a chain, a miserable prison to them. They can frequent the theatre, or listen in a lecture-hall, but the house of God is too dreary for them. I wish I were not compelled to say so, but truly in our factories, workshops, and foundries, there is no room for Christ. The world is elbowing and pushing for more room, till there is scarce a corner left where the Babe of Bethlehem can be laid.

As for the inns of modern times—who would think of finding Christ there? Putting out of our catalogue those hotels and roadside houses which are needed for the accommodation of travellers, what greater curse have we than our taverns and pot-houses? What wider gates of hell? Who would ever resort to such places as we have flaring with gas light at the corners of all our streets to find Christ there? As well might we expect to find him in the bottomless pit! We should be just as likely to look for angels in hell, as to look for Christ in a gin palace! He who is separate from sinners, finds no fit society in the reeking temple of Bacchus. There is no room for Jesus in the inn. I think I would rather rot or feed the crows, than earn my daily bread by the pence of fools, the hard-earnings of the poor man, stolen from his ragged children, and his emaciated wife. What do many publicans fatten upon but the flesh, and bones, and blood, and souls of men. He who grows rich on the fruits of vice is a beast preparing for the slaughter. Truly, there is no room for Christ among the drunkards of Ephraim. They who have anything to do with Christ should hear him say—"Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." There is no room for Christ now-a-days even in the places of public resort.

IV. This brings me to my fourth head, which is the most pertinent,

and the most necessary to dwell upon for a moment. HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST?

As the palace, and the forum, and the inn, have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have *you* room for Christ? "Well," says one, "I have room for him, but I am not worthy that he should come to me." Ah! I did not ask about worthiness; have you room for him? "Oh," says one, "I have an empty void the world can never fill!" Ah! I see you have room for him. "Oh! but the room I have in my heart is so base!" So was the manger. "But it is so despicable!" So was the manger a thing to be despised. "Ah! but my heart is so foul!" So, perhaps, the manger may have been. "Oh! but I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ!" Nor was the manger a place fit for him, and yet there was he laid. "Oh! but I have been such a sinner; I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils!" Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. Have you room for him? Never mind what the past has been; he can forget and forgive. It mattereth not what even the present state may be if thou mournest it. If thou hast but room for Christ he will come and be thy guest. Do not say, I pray you, "I hope *I shall have* room for him;" the time is come that he shall be born; Mary cannot wait months and years. Oh! sinner, if thou hast room for him let him be born in thy soul to-day. "To day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "To-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation." Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus now! "Oh!" saith one, "I have room for him, but will he come?" Will he come indeed! Do you but set the door of your heart open, do but say, "Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean I look to thee; come, lodge within my heart," and he will come to thee, and he will cleanse the manger of thy heart, nay, will transform it into a golden throne, and there he will sit and reign for ever and for ever. Oh! I have such a free Christ to preach this morning! I would I could preach him better. I have such a precious loving Jesus to preach, he is willing to find a home in humble hearts. What! are there no hearts here this morning that will take him in? Must my eye glance round these galleries and look at many of you who are still without him, and are there none who will say, "Come in, come in?" Oh! it shall be a happy day for you if you shall be enabled to take him in your arms and receive him as the consolation of Israel! You may then look forward even to death with joy, and say with Simeon—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." My Master wants room! Room for him! Room for him! I, his herald, cry aloud, Room for the Saviour! Room! Here is my royal Master—have you room for him? Here is the Son of God made flesh—have you room for him? Here is he who can forgive all sin—have you room for him? Here is he who can take you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—have you room for him? Here is he who when he cometh in will never go out again, but abide with you for ever to make your heart a heaven of joy and bliss for you—have you room for him? 'Tis all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your want of feeling, your want of goodness, your want of grace—all these will be but room for him. Have you room for

him? Oh! Spirit of God, lead many to say, "Yes, my heart is ready." Ah! then he will come and dwell with you.

"Joy to the world the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne
And every voice a song."

V. I conclude with the remark, that if you have room for Christ, then from this day forth remember THE WORLD HAS NO ROOM FOR YOU; for the text says not only that there was no room for him, but look—"There was no room *for them*,"—no room for Joseph, nor for Mary, any more than for the babe. Who are his father, and mother, and sister, and brother, but those that receive his word and keep it? So, as there was no room for the blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father, remember henceforth there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ. There is no room for you to take your *ease;* no, you are to be a soldier of the cross, and you will find no ease in all your life-warfare. There is no room for you to sit down *contented with your own attainments*, for you are a traveller, and you are to forget the things that are behind, and press forward to that which is before; no room for you *to hide your treasure* in, for here the moth and rust doth corrupt; no room for you *to put your confidence*, for "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." From this day there will be no room for you in *the world's good opinion*—they will count you to be an offscouring; no room for you in the world's *polite society*—you must go without the camp, bearing his reproach. From this time forth, I say, if you have room for Christ, the world will hardly find room of *sufferance* for you; you must expect now to be laughed at; now you must wear the fool's cap in men's esteem; and your song must be at the very beginning of your pilgrimage.

"Jesus, I thy cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shall be."

There is no room for you in the worldling's love. If you expect that everybody will praise you, and that your good actions will all be applauded, you will quite be mistaken. The world, I say, has no room for the man who has room for Christ. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." "Ye are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." Thank God, you need not ask the world's hospitality. If it will give you but a stage for action, and lend you for an hour a grave to sleep in, 'tis all you need; you will require no permanent dwelling-place here, since you seek a city that is to come, which hath foundations; whose builder and maker is God. You are hurrying through this world as a stranger through a foreign land, and you rejoice to know that though you are an alien and a foreigner here, yet you are a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household to God.

What say you, young soldier, will you enlist on such terms as these? Will you give room for Christ when there is to be henceforth no room for you—when you are to be separated for ever, cut off from among the world's kith and kin mayhap—cut off from carnal confidence for ever? Are you willing, notwithstanding all this, to receive the traveller in? The Lord help you to do so, and to him shall be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SINNER'S END.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28TH, 1862, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction."—Psalm lxxiii. 17, 18.

WANT of understanding has destroyed many. The dark pit of ignorance has engulfed its thousands. Where the lack of understanding has not sufficed to slay, it has been able seriously to wound. Lack of understanding upon doctrinal truth, providential dealing, or inward experience, has often caused the people of God a vast amount of perplexity and sorrow, much of which they might have avoided had they been more careful to consider and understand the ways of the Lord. My brethren, if our eyes are dim, and our hearts forgetful as to eternal things, we shall be much vexed and tormented in mind, as David was when he understood not the sinner's end; for indeed it is a great mystery to ordinary reason to see the ungodly prospering and pampered while the righteous are chastened and afflicted. Let us, however, receive a clear understanding with regard to the death, judgment, and condemnation of the proud sinner, then at once our sorrows and suspicions are removed, and petulance gives place to gratitude. See the ox paraded through the streets covered with garlands; who envies its lot when he remembers the axe and the altar? The child may see nothing but the flowers, but from the man of understanding no childish ornament can conceal the victim's misery.

The best place in which to be instructed with heavenly wisdom is the sanctuary of God. Until David went there he was in a mist, but entering its hallowed portals, he stood upon a mountain's summit, and the clouds floated far beneath his feet. You ask me what there could have been in the ancient sanctuary which could have enlightened David as to the end of the wicked. It may be, my brethren, that while he sat before the Lord in prayer, his spirit had such communion with the unseen God, that he looked into unseen things, and saw, as in an open vision, the ultimate doom of the graceless; or it may be that the hallowed songs of Israel's congregation foretold the overthrow of the foemen of Jehovah, and stirred the royal soul. Perhaps on that holy day the priests read in the scanty pages of the then

written work some ancient story, such as had refreshed the Psalmist in his happier seasons. It may have been that they rehearsed in the ears of the people the years beyond the flood, and the universal death which swept a world of sinners to their eternal prisons with a flood of wrath; or it may be that they read concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fiery shower which utterly consumed the cities of the plain. It is not impossible that the theme of meditation led the devout monarch back to the plagues of Egypt, and the day of the Lord's vengeance, when he overthrew proud Pharaoh and his hosts in the midst of the Red Sea. The book of the wars of the Lord is full of notable records, all revealing most clearly that the right hand of the Lord hath sooner or later dashed in pieces all his enemies.

Possibly when David went into the sanctuary of God *the Law* was read in his ears. He heard the blessings for obedience, the curses for rebellion; and as he listened to the thundering anathemas of the law which curses none in vain, it may be that he said, "Now understand I their end." Certainly a due estimate of the law of God, and the justice which maintains its dignity will clear up all fears concerning the ultimate escape of the wicked. Such a law and such a judge allow not the slightest suspicion that sin will always prosper. Moreover, brethren, David could not well go up to the sanctuary without witnessing a sacrifice, and as he saw the knife uplifted and driven into the throat of the victim, and knew that he himself was preserved from destruction by the sufferings of a substitute, represented by that lamb, he may have learnt that the wicked, having no such sacrifice to trust to, must be led as sheep to the slaughter, and as the bullock is felled by the axe, so must they be utterly destroyed. By some of these means, either by the sight of the sacrifice, or by his own meditations, or by the word read and the expositions given by prophets or priests in the sanctuary—it was in God's own house that he understood the end of the wicked. I trust, beloved, if you lack understanding in any spiritual matters, you will go up to the house of the Lord to inquire in his temple. The word of God is to us as the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest, prayer asks counsel at the hand of the Lord, and often the lip of the minister is God's oracle to our hearts. If you are vexed at any time because Providence seems to deal indulgently with the vile, and harshly with you, come ye to the spot where prayer is wont to be made, and while learning the justice of God, and the overthrow which he will surely bring upon the impenitent, ye shall go to your houses calmed in mind and disciplined in spirit. May you sing as Dr. Watts puts it—

"I saw the wicked rise,
And felt my heart repine,
While haughty fools, with scornful eyes,
In robes of honour shine.
The tumults of my thought
Held me in dark suspense,
Till *to thy house* my feet were brought,
To learn thy justice thence.
Thy word with light and power
Did my mistakes amend;
I view'd the sinner's life before,
But here I learn'd *their end*."

This morning we have selected our subject for many ends, but more especially with the anxious desire that we may win souls for Christ; that we may see a feast of ingathering at the end of the year;

that this may be the best of days to many, the birthday of many immortal souls. The burden of the Lord weighs down my soul this morning; my heart is filled even to bursting with an agony of desire that sinners may be saved. O Lord make bare thine arm this day, even this day.

In enlarging upon our solemn subject, first, *let us understand the sinner's end;* secondly, *let us profit by our understanding of it;* thirdly, *let us, having received this understanding, anxiously and earnestly warn those whose end this must be except they repent.*

I. First, then, gathering up all our powers of mind and thought, LET US ENDEAVOUR TO UNDERSTAND THE SINNER'S END. Let me rehearse it in your ears.

The end of the sinner, like the end of every man else in this world, is *death.* When he dieth, it may be, that he will die gently, for often there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. A seared conscience gives a quietude of stupidity just as a full forgiveness of sin gives a peacefulness of perfect rest. They talk about another world as though they had no dread; they speak of standing before God as though they had no transgression. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave," "He fell asleep like a child," say his friends; and others exclaim, "He was so happy, that he must be a saint." Ah! this is but their apparent end. God knoweth that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane. The sun sets in glowing colours, but O the darkness of the black tempestuous night. The waters flash like silver as the soul descends into their bosom, but who shall tell the tenfold horrors which congregate within their dreadful deeps. Frequently, on the other hand, the death of the wicked is not thus peaceful. Not always can the hypocrite play out his game to the end; the mask slips off too soon and conscience tells the truth. Even in this world, with some men, the storm of everlasting wrath begins to beat upon the soul before it leaves the shelter of the body. Ah, then, the cries, the groans! What dread forebodings of the unquiet spirits! What visions of judgment! What anxious peerings into the midnight of future banishment and ruin! Ah, then the cravings after a little longer span of life, the clutchings at anything for the bare chance of hope. May your ears be spared the dreadful outcry of the spirit when it feels itself seized by the hand invisible and dragged downward to its certain doom. Give me sooner to be shut up in prison for months and years than to stand by dying beds such as I have myself witnessed. They have written their memorial on my young heart; the scars of the wounds they gave me are there still. Why the faces of some men, like mirrors, reflect the flames of hell while yet they live. All this, however, is but of secondary importance compared with that which follows death. To the ungodly there is awful significance in that verse of the Revelation, "I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was *Death, and Hell followed with him.*"

One woe is past, but there are other woes to come. If death were all, I were not here this morning; for little mattereth it in what style a man dies, if it were not that he shall live again. The sinner's death is *the death of all in which he took delight.* No cups of drunkeness for

thee again, no viol, no lute, no sound of music, no more the merry dance, no more the loud lascivious song, no jovial company, no high-sounding blasphemies; all these are gone for ever. Dives, thy purple is plucked from off thee, the red flames shall be thy mantle. Where now thy fine linen, wherefore is thy nakedness thus revealed to thy shame and contempt? Where now thy delicate tables, O thou who didst fare sumptuously every day? Thy parched lips shall crave in vain the blessed drop to cool thy tongue. Now where are thy riches, thou rich fool? Thy barns are indeed pulled down, but thou needest not build greater, thy corn, thy wine, thine oil have vanished like a dream, and thou art poor indeed, cursed with a depth of penury such as the dog-licked Lazarus never knew. Death removes every delight from the graceless. It takes away from his eye, his ear, his hand, his heart, everything which might yield him solace. The cruel Moabites of death shall cut down every fair tree of hope, and fill up with huge stones every well of comfort, and there shall be nothing left for the spirit but a dreary desert, barren of all joy or hope, which the soul must traverse with weary feet for ever and ever!

Nor is this all. Let us understand their end yet farther. No sooner is the sinner dead than *he stands before the bar of God* in his disembodied state. That impure spirit is set before the blazing eye of God. Its deeds are well known to itself; it needs no opening of the great books as yet. A motion of the eternal finger bids it go its way. Whither can it go? It dare not climb to heaven; there is but one road open: it sinks to its appointed place. The expectation of future torment plagues the soul with a self-kindled hell, conscience becomes a never-dying, ever-gnawing worm. Conscience, I say, crieth in the souls of men, "Now where art thou? Thou art lost, and this thy lost estate thou hast brought upon thyself. Thou art not yet judged" says conscience; "yet thou art lost, for when those books are opened, thou knowest that their records will condemn thee." Memory wakes up and confirms the voice of conscience "'Tis true," she saith, "'tis true." Now the soul remembers its thousand faults and crimes. The judgment also shakes off its slumber, holds up its scales, and reminds the man that conscience clamours not amiss. Hope has been smitten down, but all the fears are living and full of vigour; like serpents with a hundred heads, they sting the heart through and through. The heart bowed down with unnumbered dreads moaneth within itself: "The awful trumpet will soon sound, my body will rise; I must suffer both in body and in soul for all my wrong-doings, there is no hope for me, no hope for me. Would God I had listened when I was warned! Ah! would to God that I had turned at the faithful rebuke, that when Jesus Christ was presented to me in the Gospel I had believed on him! But no, I despised my own salvation. I chose the fleeting pleasures of time, and for that poor price I have earned eternal ruin. I chose rather to drown my conscience than to let it lead me to glory. I turned my back upon the right, and now here I am, waiting like a prisoner in a condemned cell till the great assize shall come and I shall stand before the Judge."

Let us go on to consider their end. *The day of days, that dreadful*

day has come. The millennial rest is over, the righteous have had their thousand years of glory upon earth. Hark! the dread trumpet, louder than a thousand thunders, startles death and hell. Its awful sound shakes both earth and heaven; every tomb is rent and emptied. From the teeming womb of earth, that fruitful mother of mankind, up start multitudes upon multitudes of bodies, as though they were new-born; lo, from Hades come the spirits of the lost ones—and they each enter into the body in which once it sinned, while the righteous sit upon their thrones of glory, their transformed bodies made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus the Lord from heaven. The voice of the trumpet waxes exceeding loud and long, the sea has given up her dead, from tongues of fire, from lion's jaws, and from corruption's worm, all mortal flesh has been restored, atom to atom, bone to bone, at the fiat of Omnipotence all bodies are refashioned. And now the great white throne is set with pomp of angels. Every eye beholds it. The great books are open, and all men hear the rustling of their awful leaves. The finger of the hand that once was crucified turns leaf after leaf, and names of men are sounded forth—to glory, to destruction—"Come ye blessed;" "Depart ye cursed:"—these are the final arbiters of glory or of ruin. And now where art thou, sinner, for thy turn is come? Thy sins are read and published! Shame consumes thee. Thy proud face now mantles with a thousand blushes. Thou wouldst cover thyself, but thou canst not, and, most of all, thou art afraid of the face of him who to-day looks on thee with eyes of pity, but then with glances of fiery wrath, the face of Jesus, the face of the Lamb, the dying Lamb, then enthroned in judgment. Oh how ashamed thou wilt be to think thou hast despised him, to think that though he died for sinners, thou didst scorn and scoff him, didst malign his followers and slander his religion! How piteously wilt thou crave a veil of granite to hide thy shameful face from him. "Rocks hide me! Mountains fall upon me! Hide me from the face of him that sits upon the throne." But it must not—it must not be.

> "Where now, oh, where shall sinners seek
> For shelter in the general wreck?
> Shall falling rocks be o'er them thrown?
> See rocks, like snow, dissolving down."

O, sinner, this is but the beginning of the end, for now thy sentence is read out, thy doom pronounced, hell opens her wide jaws, and thou fallest to destruction. Where art thou now? Body and soul re-married in an everlasting union, having sinned together must now suffer together, and that for ever. I cannot picture it; imagination's deepest dye paints not this tenfold night. I cannot pourtray the anguish which both soul and body must endure—each nerve a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, each mental power a blazing furnace heated seven times hotter with raging flames of misery. Oh, my God, deliver us from ever knowing this in our own persons!

Let us now pause and review the matter. It behoves us to remember concerning the sinner's latter end, that *it is absolutely certain.* The same "word" which says, "he that believeth *shall* be saved," makes it also equally certain and clear that "he that believeth

not *shall* be damned." If God be true, then must sinners suffer. If sinners suffer not, then saints have no glory, our faith is vain, Christ's death was vain, and we may as well abide comfortably in our sins. Sinner, whatever philosophy may urge with its syllogisms, whatever scepticism may declare with her laughter and sneers, it is absolutely certain that, dying as thou art, the wrath of God shall come upon thee to the uttermost. If there were but a thousandth part of a fear that you or I might perish, it were wisdom to fly to Christ; but when it is not a "perhaps" or a "peradventure," but an absolute certainty that he who rejects Christ must be lost for ever, I do conjure you, if ye be rational men, see to it, and set your houses in order, for God will surely smite, though he tarry never so long. Though for ninety years thou avoid the arrows of his bow, his bolt will in due time find thee, and pierce thee through, and where art thou then?

And as it is certain, so let us recollect that to the sinner it is often *sudden*. In such an hour as he thinketh not, to him the Son of man cometh. As pain upon a woman in travail, as the whirlwind on the traveller, as the eagle on his prey, so suddenly cometh death. Buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, chambering and full of wantonness, the ungodly man saith, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee;" but as the frost often cometh when the buds are swelling ready for the spring and nips them on a sudden how often doth the frost of death nip all the hopeful happiness of ungodly men and it withers once for all. Hast thou a lease of thy life? Lives there a man who can insure that thou shalt breathe another hour? Let but thy blood freeze in its channels; let but thy breath stop for a moment, and where art thou? A spider's web is a strong cable when compared with the thread on which mortal life depends. We have told you a thousand times, till the saying has become so trite that you smile when we repeat it, that life is frail, and yet ye live O men, as though your bones were brass, and your flesh were adamant, and your lives like the years of the Eternal God. As breaks the dream of the sleeper, as flies the cloud before the wind, as melts the foam from the breaker, as dies the meteor from the sky, so suddenly shall the sinner's joys pass from him for ever, and who shall measure the greatness of his amazement?

Remember, O sons of men, how *terrible* is the end of the ungodly. You think it easy for me to talk of death and damnation now, and it is not very difficult for you to hear; but when you and I shall come to die, ah! then every word we have uttered shall have a weightier meaning than this dull hour can gather from it. Imagine the sinner dying. Weeping friends are about him; he tosses to and fro upon yon weary couch. The strong man is bowed down. The last struggle is come. Friends watch the glazing of the eyes; they wipe the clammy sweat from the brow. At last they say, "He is gone! He is gone!" Oh, my brethren, what amazement must seize upon the unsanctified spirit then! Ah, if his spirit could then speak, it would say, "It is all true that I was wont to hear. I spoke ill of the minister, the last sabbath in the year, for trying to frighten us, as I said, but he did not speak half so earnestly as he ought to have done. Oh, I

wonder he did not fall down upon his knees and pray me to repent, but even if he had, I should have rejected his entreaties. Oh, if I had known! If I had known! If I had known all this; if I could have believed it; if I had not been such a fool as to doubt God's word and think it all a tale to frighten children with. Oh, if I had known all this! but now I am lost! lost! lost for ever!" I think I hear that spirit's wail of utter dismay, as it exclaims, "Yes, it *has* come; the thing whereof I was told it has all come to pass. Fixed is my everlasting state; no offers of mercy now; no blood of sprinkling now; no silver trumpet of the gospel now; no invitations to a loving Saviour's bosom now! God is in arms against me. His terrors have broken me in pieces, and as a leaf is driven with the whirlwind, so am I driven I know not whither; but this I know, I am lost, lost, lost beyond all hope." Horrible is the sinner's end. I shudder while thus briefly I talk of it. O, believer, take heed that thou understandest this well.

Do not fail to remember that the horror of the sinner's end will consist very much in the reflection that he will *lose heaven*. Is that a little? The harps of angels, the company of the redeemed, the smile of God, the society of Christ—is this a trifle—to lose the saint's best rest, that heritage for which martyrs wade through rivers of blood, that portion which Jesus thought it worth while to die that he might purchase. They lose all this, and then they earn in exchange *the pains of hell*, which are more desperate than tongue can tell. Consider a moment! He that inflicts the punishment is God. What blows must He strike! He did but put out his finger and he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon in the Red Sea. What will it be when stroke after stroke shall fall from his heavy hand? Oh Omnipotence, Omnipotence, how dreadful are thy blows! Sinner, see and tremble; God himself comes out in battle against you? Why the arrows of a man, when they stick in your conscience, are very sharp, but what will the arrows of God be! How will they drink your blood and infuse poison into your veins. Even now, when you feel a little sickness you are afraid to die, and when you hear a heart-searching sermon, it makes you melancholy. But what will it be when God in thunder dressed, comes out against thee and his fire consumes thee like the stubble. Will *God* punish thee? O sinner, what punishment must that be which he inflicts? I tremble for thee. Flee, I pray thee, to the cross of Christ, where shelter is prepared.

Remember, moreover, it will be a God without mercy, who will then dash thee in pieces. He is all mercy to thee to-day, O sinner. In the wooing words of the Gospel he bids thee live, and in *his* name I tell thee as God lives he willeth not thy death, but would rather thou shouldest turn unto him and live; but if thou wilt not live; if thou wilt be his enemy; if thou *wilt* run upon the point of his spear, then he will be even with thee in the day when mercy reigns in heaven, and justice holds its solitary court in hell. O that ye were wise, and would believe in Jesus to the salvation of your souls!

I would have you know, O ye who choose your own destructions, that ye shall suffer *universally*. Now, if our head ache, or if our heart be palpitating, or a member be in pain, there are other parts of

the body which are at ease; but then, every power of body and of mind shall suffer at one time. All the chords of man's nature shall vibrate with the discord of desolation. Then shall suffering be *unceasing*. Here we have a pause in our pain; the fever has its rests; paroxysms of agony have their seasons of quiet; but there in hell the gnashing of teeth shall be unceasing, the worm's gnawings shall know no cessation; on, on for ever—for ever a hot race of misery.

Then, worst of all, it shall be *without end*. When ten thousand years have run their course, thou shalt be no nearer to the end than at first. When millions have been piled on millions, still the wrath shall be *to come*—to come, as much as if there had been no wrath at all. Ah! these are dreadful things to talk of, and you who hear or read my sermons know that I am falsely accused when men say that I dwell often upon this dreadful theme; but I feel as if there is no hope for some of you, unless I thunder at you. I know that often God has broken some hearts with an alarming sermon, who might never have been won by an inviting and wooing discourse. My experience goes to show that the great hammer of God breaks many hearts, and some of my more terrible sermons have been even more useful than those in which I lifted up the cross and tenderly pleaded with men. Both must be used, sometimes the love which draws, and anon the vengeance which drives! Oh, my hearers, I cannot bear the thought that you should be lost! As I meditate, I have a vision of some of you passing away from this world, and will you curse me? Will you curse me as you go down to the pit? Will you accuse me, "You were not faithful with me. Pastor, you did not warn me; minister, you did not strive with me?" No, by the help of my Lord, through whose grace I am called to the work of this ministry, I must, I will be clear of your blood. You shall not make your bed in hell without knowing what an uneasy resting place ye choose. Ye *shall* hear the warning. It *shall* ring in your ears. "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting fire? Who among us shall abide with the eternal burnings?" I do assure you a true love speaks to you in every harsh word I utter, a love that cares too much for you to flatter you, a love which must tell you these things without mitigating them in any degree, lest ye perish through my trifling. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Why will ye reject your mercies? God help you by his Holy Spirit to understand your latter end and lay hold on Jesus *now*.

II. This brings us to our second remark—If we have understood the sinner's end, LET US NOW PROFIT BY IT. How can we do this?

We can profit by it, first, by *never envying the ungodly again*. If at any time we feel with the Psalmist that we cannot understand how it is that the enemies of God enjoy the sweets of life, let us cease at once from such questionings, because we remember their latter end. Let David's confession warn us—

"Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I
To mourn, and murmur, and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honour shine!
But oh, their end! their dreadful end!
Thy sanctuary taught me so:
On slippery rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below.
Now let them boast how tall they rise,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain."

If the sinnner's end be so terrible, *how grateful* ought we to be, if we have been plucked from these devouring flames! Brothers and sisters, what was there in us why God should have mercy on us? Can we ascribe the fact that we have been washed from sin in Jesu's blood, and made to choose the way of righteousness—can we ascribe this to anything but grace—free, rich, sovereign grace? Come then, let us with our tears for others mingle joyous gratitude to God for that eternal love which has delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Above all let us prize the sufferings of Christ beyond all cost. Oh, blessed cross, which has lifted us up from hell. Oh, dear wounds, which have become gates of heaven to us. Can we refuse to love that Son of man—that Son of God? Will we not to-day, at the foot of his dear cross, give ourselves to him anew, and ask him to bestow on us more grace, that we may live more to his honour, and spend and be spent in his service? Saved from hell, I must love thee, Jesus; and while life and being last, I must live and be prepared to die for thee.

Again, beloved friends, how such a subject as this should lead you that profess to be followers of Christ to *make your calling and election sure!* If the end of the impenitent be so dreadful, let nothing content us but certainties with regard to our own escape from this woe. Have you any doubts this morning? Have no peace of mind till those doubts are all solved. Is there any question upon your spirit as to whether you have real faith in the living Saviour? If so, rest not, I pray you, till in prayer and humble faith you have renewed your vows and come afresh to Christ. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove yourselves; build on the rock; make sure work for eternity, lest it should happen after all, that you have been deceived. Oh, if it should turn out so. Alas! alas! alas! for you to have been so near to heaven and yet to be cast down to hell.

Now this subject should teach Christians to *be in earnest about the salvation of others.* If heaven were a trifle we need not be zealous for the salvation of men. If the punishment of sin were some slight pain we need not exercise ourselves diligently to deliver men from it; but oh, if "eternity" be a solemn word, and if the wrath to come be terrible to bear, how should we be instant in season and out of season, striving to win others from the flames! What have you done this year, some of you? I fear me, brother Christians, some of you have done very little. Blessed be God, there are many earnest hearts among you; you are not all asleep; there are some of you who strive with both your hands to do your Master's work, but even you are not as earnest as you should be. The preacher puts himself here in the list, mournfully confessing that he does not preach as he desires to preach. Oh, had I the tears and cries of Baxter, or the fervent seraphic zeal of Whitfield, my soul were well content, but, alas! we preach coldly upon burning themes and carelessly upon matters which ought to make our hearts like flames of fire. But I say, brethren, are there not men and women here, members of this Church, doing nothing for Christ; no soul saved this year by you, Christ unhonoured by you; no gems placed in his crown? What have ye been living for, ye cumber-ground? Wherefore stand ye in the

Church, ye fruitless trees? God make you—oh ye that do little for him—to humble yourselves before him, and to begin the next year with this determination, that knowing the terrors of the Lord, you will persuade men, and labour, and strive to bring sinners to the cross of Christ.

III. But we must leave that point of instruction and come to our last and pleading point, and that is very earnestly to WARN THOSE WHOSE END THIS MUST BE EXCEPT THEY REPENT.

And who are they? Please to remember we are not speaking now of people in the street, of drunkards, and harlots, and profane swearers, and such like—we know that their damnation is sure and just—but, alas, I need not look far. If I glance along these seats and look into faces upon which my eye rests every Sabbath day, there are some of you, some of you who are unconverted still. You are not immoral but you are unregenerated; you are not unamiable but you are ungracious, you are not far from the kingdom, but you are not *in* the kingdom. It is *your* end I speak of now, *yours* ye sons of godly mothers, *yours* ye daughters of holy parents —*your* end, unless God give you repentance. I want you to see where you are standing to-day. "*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places.*" If it has ever been your lot to tread the glaciers of the Alps you will have seen upon that mighty river of ice, huge wave-like mountains of crystal, and deep fissures of unknown depth, and of an intensely blue colour. If condemned to stand on one of these icy eminences with a yawning crevasse at its base, our peril would be extreme. Sinner it is on such a slippery place you stand, only the danger is far greater than my metaphor sets forth.

Your standing is smooth; pleasure attends you; yours are not the rough ways of penitence and contrition—sin's road is smooth—but ah how slippery from its very smoothness. O be warned, you must fall sooner or later, stand as firmly as you may. Sinner you may fall *now*, at once. The mountain yields beneath your feet, the slippery ice is melting every moment. Look down and learn your speedy doom. Yonder yawning gulf must soon receive you, while we look after you with hopeless tears. Our prayers cannot follow you; from your slippery standing place you fall and you are gone for ever. *Death* makes the place where you stand slippery, for it dissolves your life every hour. *Time* makes it slippery, for every instant it cuts the ground from under your feet. The *vanities* which you enjoy make your place slippery, for they are all like ice which shall melt before the sun. You have no foot-hold, sinner, you have no sure hope, no confidence. It is a melting thing you trust to. If you are depending on what you mean to do—that is no foot-hold. If you get peace from what you have felt or from what you have done—that is no foot-hold. It is a slippery place you stand in. I read yesterday of the hunter of the chamois springing from crag to crag after the game he had wounded. The creature leapt down many a frowning precipice, but the hunter fearlessly followed as best he could. At last in his hot haste he found himself slipping down a shelving rock. The stone crumbled away as it came in contact with his thickly-nailed shoes, which he tried to dig into the rock to stop his descent. He strove to seize on every little inequality, regardless of the sharp edges; but as his fingers, bent convulsively like

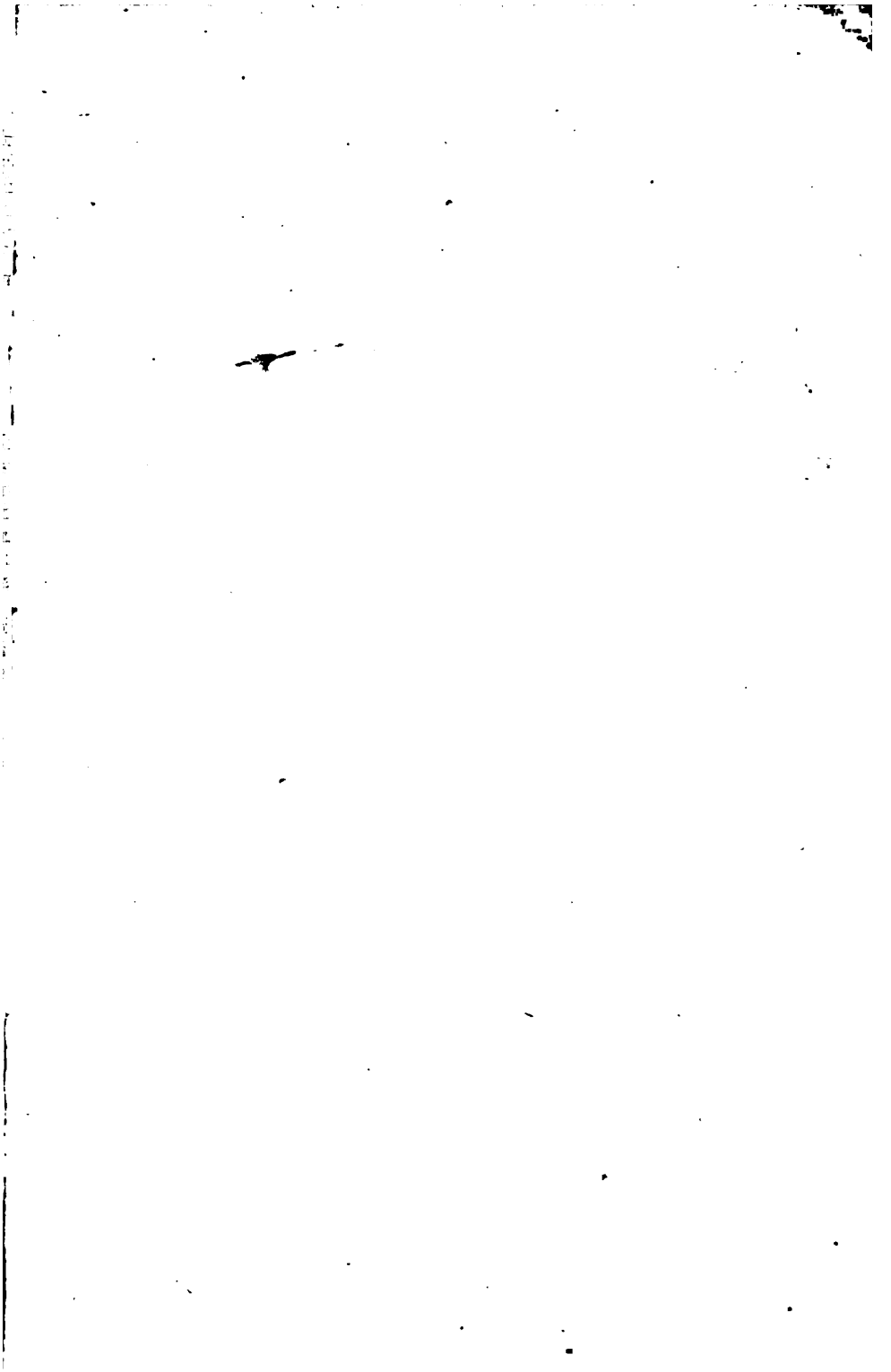
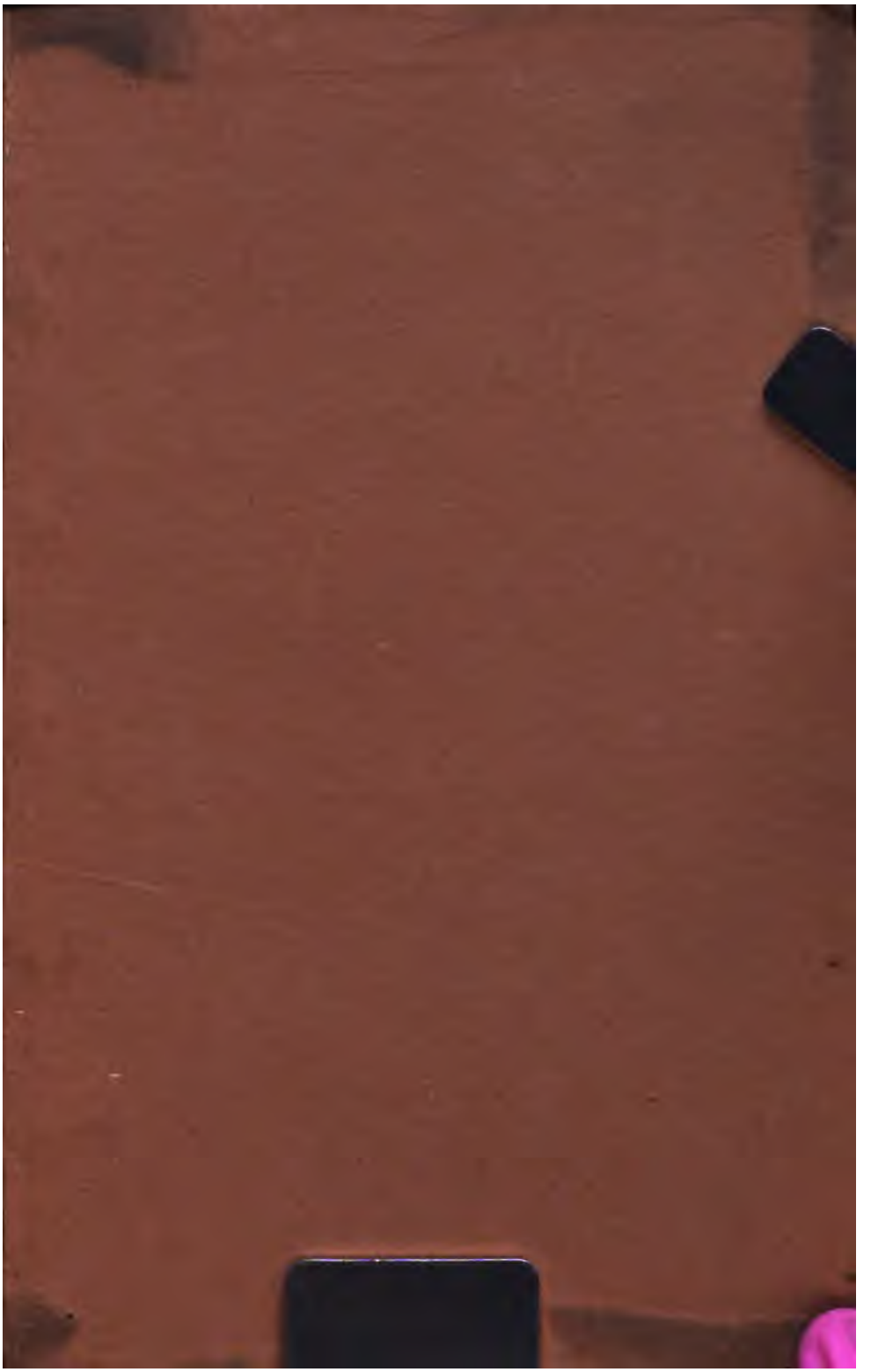
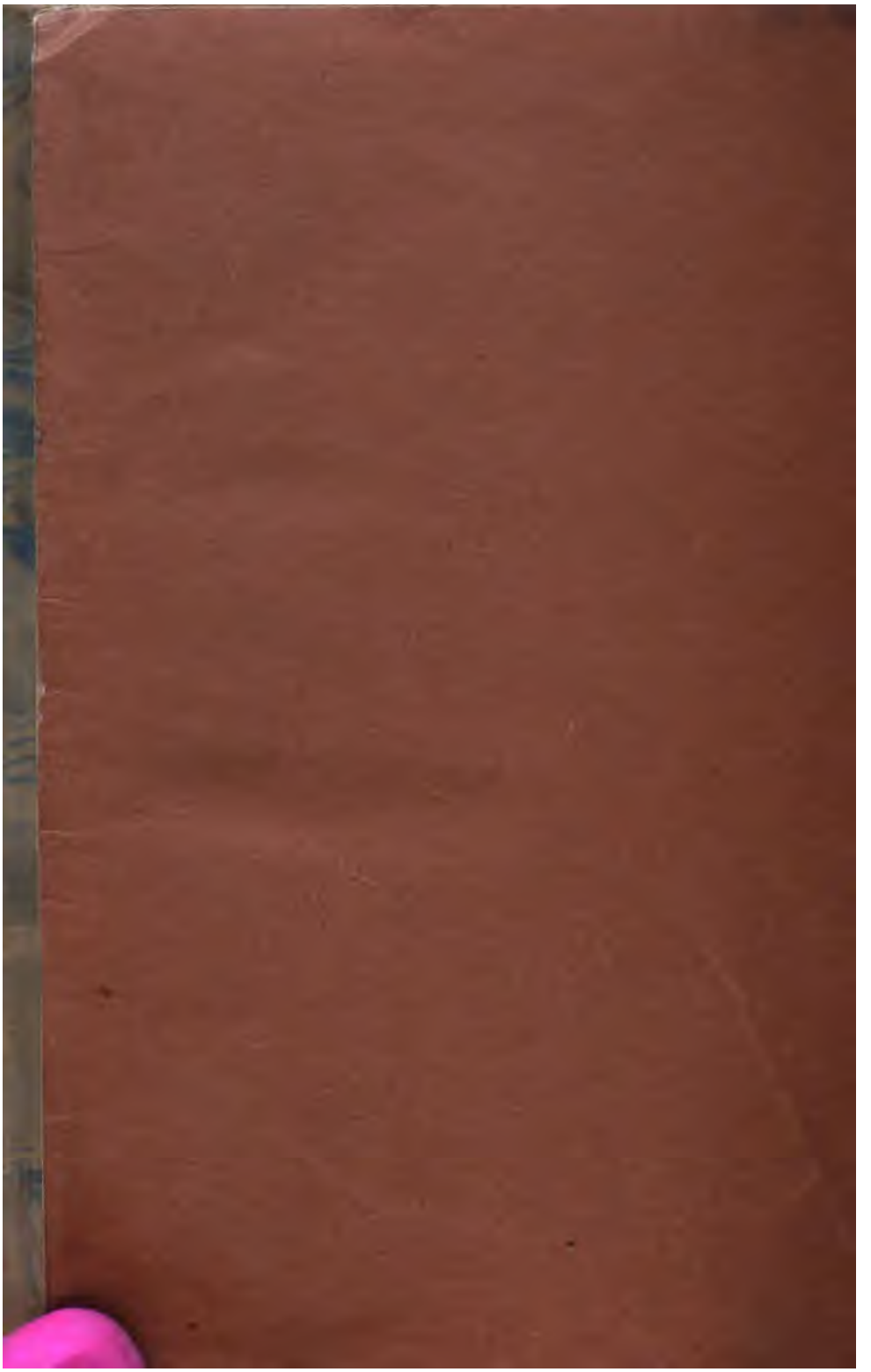
talons, scraped the stone, it crumbled off as though it had been baked clay, tearing the skin like ribands from his fingers and cutting into his flesh. Having let go his long pole, he heard it slipping down behind him, its iron point changing as it went; and then it flew over the ledge bounding into the depths below. In a moment he must follow, for with all his endeavours he is unable to stop himself. His companion looks on in speechless horror. But heaven intervenes. Just as he expects to go over the brink, one foot is arrested in its descent by a slight inequality. He hardly dares to move lest the motion might break his foot-hold, but gently turning his head to see how far he is from the brink, he perceives that his foot has stopped not a couple of inches from the edge of the rock; those two inches further and destruction had been his lot.

Ungodly man, in this mirror see thyself, you are sliding down a slippery place, you have neither foot-hold, nor hand-hold. All your hopes crumble beneath your weight. The Lord alone knows how near you are to your eternal ruin. Perhaps this morning you are scarce two inches from the edge of the precipice. Your drunken companion who died a few days ago, has just now gone over the edge. Did you not hear him falling—and you yourself are about to perish. Good God! the man is almost gone! Oh that I could stay you in your downward course. The Lord alone can do it, but he works by means. Turn round and gaze upon your past life; behold the wrath of God which must come on account of it. You are sliding down the slippery places to a fearful end, but the angel of mercy calls you, and the hand of love can save you. Hear how Jesus pleads with thee. "Put thy hand in mine," he says; "thou art lost, man, but I can save thee now." Poor wretch! wilt thou not do it. Then art thou lost. Oh wherefore wilt thou not, when love and tenderness would woo thee, wherefore wilt thou not put thy trust in him. He is able and willing to save thee, even now. Believe in Jesus, and though thou art now in slippery places, thy feet shall soon be set upon a rock of safety. I know not how it is, the more earnestly I long to speak, and the more passionately I would set forth the danger of ungodly men, the more my tongue refuses. These weighty burdens of the Lord are not to be entrusted it seems to the power of oratory. I must stammer and groan them out to you. I must in short sentences tell out my message and leave it with you. I have the solemn conviction this morning that there are scores and hundreds of you who are on the road to hell. You know you are. If conscience speaks truly to you, you know you have never sought Christ, you have never put your trust in him, you are still what you always were, ungodly, unconverted. Is this a trifle? Oh, I ask you, I put it to your own judgments, is this a thing of which you ought to think carelessly? I pray you let your hearts speak. Is it not time that some of you began to think of these things? Nine years ago we had some hopes of you, those hopes have been disappointed up till now As each year rolls round you promise yourself that the next shall be different; but there has been no change yet. May we not fear that you will continue entangled in the great net of procrastination until at last you will have eternally to regret that you kept deferring,

and deferring, and deferring, till it was too late. The way of salvation is not hard to comprehend; it is no great mystery, it is simply "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ with thy soul and he will save it. I know you will not do this unless the Holy Spirit constrains you, but this does not remove your responsibility. If you reject this great salvation you deserve to perish. When it is laid so clearly before you, if you refuse it, no eye can pity *you* among all the thousands in hell or all the millions in heaven.

"How they deserve the deepest hell
Who slight the joys above;
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the cords of love."

May I ask all Christian people to join in prayer for the ungodly. When I cannot plead as a preacher, I bless God I can plead as an intercessor. Let us spend, all of us, a little time this afternoon in private intercession. May I ask it of you as a great favour—occupy a little time this afternoon, each child of God, in praying for the unconverted among us. Conversion work does go on; there are many always coming to be united to the Church, but we want more; and we shall have more, if we pray for more.

Make this afternoon a travailing time, and if we travail in birth God will give us the spiritual seed. It is to the Holy Spirit we must look for all true regeneration and conversion, therefore let us pray for the descent of his influence, and depend upon his omnipotence and the great work must and shall be done. Could I address you in the tones of an angel, yet I could not have more to say than this, "Sinner, fly to Christ." I am glad I am weak, for now the Master's power shall be the better seen. Lord, do thou the sinner turn, and make him feel the danger of his state, and find in Christ a ransom and a rescue, and to thy name be glory.—Amen.

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